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VOLUME I

1

St Patrick and the Coming of Christianity

Ludwig Bieler

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PREFACE

The plan of *A History of Irish Catholicism* took shape at meetings of the Irish Catholic Historical Committee in conuection with the Patrician Year of 1961. Since then, the discussions of the Second Vatican Council have developed the consciousness that the Christian experience is rooted in history and that the experience of each Christian people is in a special way rooted in its own history. The critical analysis of the historian will, no doubt, underline the human element, the faults and shortcomings, as well as recording the achievements; but within the limits of its own discipline, 'in facing squarely the problem of the human element in the Church, of power, of sin and failure', it may hope to make its contribution to our maturer understanding of ourselves.

This work has been undertaken in the belief that it is now possible for a group of writers to produce a worthwhile summary of the history of Irish Catholicism. Many of the sources of this history are lost or scattered, because so much of it has been set in troubled times. A great many records have been destroyed, and for long periods the Church existed in conditions which made the keeping of archives difficult or even impossible. Much of the source-material has to be sought abroad, whether it be the manuscripts carried to Europe by the Irish monks long ago, the records of the English administration, or, most important of all, the papal archives. Indeed, part of the history itself has taken place outside Ireland, for, especially in modern times, the Irish Catholics have been scattered all over the world.

The actual writing of the history of the Irish Catholic Church has also had a slow start. A considerable amount even of the basic research is still to be done, but the stage

has been reached where a summary of results to date may be usefully attempted. When completed, this survey will run to the best part of a million words, but this is short enough measure considering the ground to be covered. In any case, there will be gaps where subjects are not yet investigated, and imperfections where the investigation is still incomplete. Its aim is to sum up our knowledge at the present state of research, and to try to indicate the directions in which further research might be most usefully carried on.

It is some years since this work was first planned, and in order to avoid further delay in publication it has been decided to issue it first in a series of fascicules and ultimately as six bound volumes. A list of the contents of the complete work, with the names of the various contributors and an indication of the progress to date, is included in each fascicule. This list indicates the first four fascicules, now published, and the next four, which are in the press. It is planned to publish a set of four every six months. As soon as the text of a particular volume has been completed a bibliography, index, etc. will be published as a separate fascicule. The bound volume will also be issued as a separate publication.

Patrick J. Corish

Maynooth
April 1967

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ABBREVIATIONS

The list given in *Irish Historical Studies* 4, 6-33 (March 1944) has been taken as the basis for all bibliographical abbreviations. A bibliography, together with a full list of abbreviations, will be published with the completion of the text of the volume. The following list is printed for the convenience of readers of the fascicule.

AI	Annals of Inisfallen (ed. Mac Airt, 1951).
AU	Annals of Ulster (ed. Hennessy and Mac-Carthy, 1887-1901).
Ann. Cott.	Annals in Cotton MS Titus A XXV (ed. Freeman, *Revue Celtique*, 41, 42).
Chron. Scott.	Chronicum Scotorum (ed. Hennessy, 1866).
LA	Liber Ardmachanus (The Book of Armagh).
LL	Lebar Laignech (The Book of Leinster).

Printed Books

Bieler, *Life and Legend*	Ludwig Bieler, *The Life and Legend of St Patrick*, Dublin 1949.
Carney, *Problem*	James Carney, *The Problem of St Patrick*, Dublin 1961.
Carney, *S.I.L.H.*	James Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature and History*, Dublin 1955.
Kenney, *Sources*	James F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland, 1. Ecclesiastical*, New York 1929.
O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*	Thomas F. Rahilly, *The Two Patricks*, Dublin 1942.

Periodicals

Anal. Bolland.	*Analecta Bollandiana*, Paris and Brussels 1882 –.
Anal. Hib.	*Analecta Hibernica*, Dublin 1930 –.
I.E.R.	*Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Dublin 1864 –.
I.H.S.	*Irish Historical Studies*, Dublin 1938 –.
Ir. Theol. Quart.	*Irish Theological Quarterly*, Maynooth 1906 –.

R.I.A. Proc.	*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, Dublin 1836.
R.S.A.I. Jn.	*Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Dublin 1892 –.
Z.C.P.	*Zeitschrift fur celtische Philologie*, Halle 1896 –.

Bibliographical note. The stimulating article by Rev. John Morris, 'The Dates of the Celtic Saints', in *Journal of Theological Studies* (new series), 17, 342 ff., has come too late for consideration. It has not caused me to revise my views on any major issue.

ST PATRICK AND THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY

Ludwig Bieler

CHRISTIANITY IN IRELAND BEFORE ST PATRICK

OWING to her geographical position, Ireland remained for a long time outside the orbit of Graeco-Roman civilization. None but the most enterprising merchants or travellers would venture beyond the 'Columns of Hercules', and when Pytheas of Massilia, in the time of Alexander the Great, wrote about his voyages along the north-western shores of Europe and of those islands which he was the first to name the Pretanic Isles he found but little credence. Even the Roman conquest of Spain, with her long Atlantic coast, does not appear to have turned the eyes of the ancients towards the islands in the far north-west. It was Caesar's conquest of Gaul and the subsequent extension of the Empire to Britain that eventually brought Ireland into the Roman sphere of influence. In the second century A.D. Ptolemy was able to give a fairly detailed description of her coast and some of its estuaries. Regular trade with the Pretanic Islands began to develop alongside the age-old traffic in tin. Ireland was reached by two main routes: by way of Roman Britain, and directly from Gaul. The vine-growing districts of Gaul in particular seem to have sold their much-treasured produce to Ireland in considerable quantities. There is also evidence of the import and of the indigenous imitation of Roman, Gallo-Roman, and Brito-Roman pottery, metal-work, and decorative crafts. The earliest script of Ireland, the oghams, is based on the Latin alphabet.

Such contacts and stimuli should neither be minimized nor exaggerated. If they did not have their full effect, the reason

is that Ireland never became a province of the Roman Empire. The conqueror of Britain, Agricola, at one time seriously contemplated an invasion of the neighbouring island, but his plan came to nothing, and was never resumed. When, centuries later, Ireland yielded to Rome, it was not the Rome of the Caesars but, in the words of St Columbanus, the Rome of the apostles Peter and Paul. It was a spiritual conquest, and it resulted in a Christian civilization, as vigorous as it was original – a civilization in many ways unique in the sub-Roman world, and one that was to have far-reaching consequences for the history of medieval western Christendom.[1]

It is significant that even in the sphere of material civilization Ireland's contacts with the Empire, and her reaction to the Roman stimulus, were intensified during the fourth century, and even more so during the fifth. Interest in the civilization of Rome apparently increased as the Irish came to know about the Christian faith. The introduction of Christianity to this island, to judge from archaeological evidence, dates from the fourth century rather than from the third. It would naturally follow in the path of the established trade-routes.

During the fourth century the churches of Gaul rose to prominence in the Western Empire. It would be strange if commerce between Ireland and that flourishing Christian province had not offered the Irish, particularly those of the south and south-east, an opportunity of learning about the new religion and, on occasion, had resulted in a number of conversions. One need not imagine those wine-merchants from Burdigala (Bordeaux) who had an emporium, Bordgal, in Ireland to have been preoccupied with the preaching of the Gospel, but the possibility that they had some share in the evangelic work cannot be ruled out. It is, to say the least, an interesting coincidence that the Corcu Loigde, who later claimed that they were the first among the Irish to receive Christianity, lived in the neighbourhood of Garranes, the

1. See Bieler, *Ireland: Harbinger of the Middle Ages*, Oxford University Press, 1963.

site that has produced the archaeological evidence for the wine-trade.[2]

Contacts with Britain were even closer. The Church of Britain could not look back on such a long and distinguished history as did the Church of Gaul. Britain had never become as thoroughly Romanized as the Roman provinces of the continent. There is no British name in all the secular Latin literature of antiquity, and Britain's contributions to the literature of ancient Christianity are few and, on the whole, undistinguished. However, by the fourth century Roman Britain was definitely a Christian country, with a fully-fledged ecclesiastical organization. Relations, friendly or otherwise, between the Irish and the British, and especially the Irish colonies in Britain and individual Irishmen serving in her Roman legions, would provide more than one channel by which Christianity could penetrate to Ireland.

It was, to all appearances, a process of infiltration, gradual and imperceptible as it had been in most parts of the Roman Empire. The beginnings of Irish Christianity have left no record; anything that may be said about them is, at best, in the nature of inference. We do not know from what social strata the earliest converts came. There is perhaps some reason for assuming that they are likely to have belonged to the lower classes rather than to the privileged ones.[3] We possess the 'Lives' of some 'pre-Patrician' saints: Ciarán of Saigir in Ossory, the 'first-born of the saints of Ireland';

2. Ó Ríordáin, 'Roman Material in Ireland' in *R.I.A. Proc.* 51, sect. c, 39 (1947).

3. Heinrich Zimmer's theory ('Über direkte Handelsverbindungen Westgalliens mit Irland im Altertum und frühen Mittelalter', *Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Berlin 1909, 578 f., 582) that the druids adopted Christian ideas as they had adopted certain concepts of Greek philosophy is utterly improbable. Their doctrine of immortality and metempsychosis is neither Greek nor Christian. It is related to similar speculations among 'primitive' peoples on the fringe of the classical world, for example the Getae (Herodotus IV, 93 f.). Since the suppression of druidism in Gaul by the decrees of successive emperors (Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius) the druids, who retreated to Britain and later to Ireland as their last stronghold, were naturally suspicious of anything Roman. In the Patrick legend they are consistently represented as the staunch defenders of Celtic paganism, and this has all the appearances of plausibility.

Ibar of Becc-Ériu in Wexford Harbour; Déclán of Ardmore; and Ailbe of Emly. Other names of early Irish saints are M'eltióc of Kinsale, Mo-chonóc, and Mo-chatóc. We have no authentic information about any of them. None of their Lives, in its present form, is earlier than the twelfth century, and although some of them seem to have incorporated considerably older material even this is centuries later than the saints themselves. Ciarán and Ibar, Déclán and Ailbe are represented as bishops; the latter two are said to have submitted to Patrick when he came as a missionary. The alleged episcopal rank of these saints, however, is inconsistent with the express testimony of Prosper that Palladius, in 431, was sent to the Irish as their first bishop, and is contradicted indirectly by the fact that there is no word for 'bishop' in the earliest Christian vocabulary in Irish. The submission to Patrick of Déclán and Ailbe is hardly historical either but reflects a time when, from the eighth century onwards, the southern churches accepted the claims of Armagh. There remains the names of the saints themselves and of the churches with which they are connected. These enable us to make some inferences. Most of these early saints, to judge from their names, were either probably or certainly British by birth,[4] and their churches, with the exception of Saigir, are all situated in the south and south-east.[5]

It is possible to glean something of this primitive Irish Christianity from the earliest stratum of Christian terms in the Irish language,[6] such as *Día* 'God', *cretem* 'belief', *ires* 'faith', *crábud* 'piety', *nóeb* 'holy' – inherited religious words which were applied to the new faith, and a few Latin loanwords for such specifically ecclesiastical terms as 'priest',

4. O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 41. Zimmer suggested that St Ibar was no other than the bishop Eborius (Eburius, Hibernius) of York, who, with two other British bishops, attended the council of Arles in A.D. 314. This identification is pure guess-work, see Kenney, *Sources*, 312.
5. Cf. Bieler, 'Christianity in Ireland during the fifth and sixth centuries: a survey and evaluation of the sources', in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 101, 163 (March 1964).
6. See Binchy, 'Patrick and his Biographers: Ancient and Modern', in *Studia Hibernica* 2, 165 f. (1962); Jan de Vries, *Keltische Religion*, Stuttgart 1961, 212.

'deacon', 'Christian'. They are suggestive of a stage when only the bare essentials of Christian doctrine and worship had taken root. Attention has already been drawn to the absence of a word for 'bishop'. It may also be pointed out that this vocabulary would not lend itself to even the most elementary theological speculation. If Pelagius, whose denial of the necessity of grace for salvation stirred up Christendom from Jerusalem to Hippo, was a native of Ireland (which is not certain), he cannot possibly have received either his theological training or his mastery of spoken Greek in the country of his birth.[7] There certainly is nothing to indicate that he did. Neither is there any reason for believing that higher learning was transplanted to Ireland early in the fifth century by continental scholars who took refuge there from the Teutonic invasions. The learning for which the schools of Ireland became so famous from the seventh century onwards is due to a development within the Irish Church.

Christian Ireland came into the clear light of recorded history for the first time when in 431, as Prosper of Aquitaine in his Chronicle informs us, the deacon Palladius was consecrated by Pope Celestine and sent to the Irish believing in Christ as their first bishop.[8] This is a statement of great historical importance. Prosper testifies to the existence of Christians in Ireland sufficient in number to call for the appointment of a bishop. He implies that there had been no bishop there before. He also makes it clear that the organization of the Church in Ireland originated directly from Rome.[9] The Christian communities that were to form the diocese of the newly-appointed bishop need not have been particularly

7. The views of Heinrich Zimmer (*Pelagius in Irland*, Berlin 1901, 213-6, note on pp. 5-7) and Kuno Meyer (*Learning in Ireland in the Fifth Century and the Transmission of Letters*, Dublin 1913) based on a confused note in a twelfth-century manuscript, are now generally recognized as a learned fable. See, *inter alia*, Bieler, 'The island of scholars', in *Revue du Moyen Age Latin* 8, 218 f. (1952).
8. 'Ad Scottos in Christum credentes ordinatus a papa Caelestino Palladius primus episcopus mittitur'.
9. The Roman initiative of the first formal mission to Ireland is confirmed by St Columbanus in his fifth letter, written in A.D. 613; Binchy, *art. cit.*, 12.

large or numerous, but Christian life must have advanced beyond the initial stage. Perhaps, one might speculate, the Pope's decision was prompted by a desire to safeguard the nascent Irish Church from infection with Pelagianism, which had recently been revived in Britain. Only two years before his consecration as bishop for the Irish, Palladius had been instrumental in the delegation to Britain, by the same Pope Celestine, of St Germanus of Auxerre as papal legate against the neo-Pelagians.[10] It is tempting to see these two papal acts as parts of one and the same ecclesiastical policy. Prosper himself[11] establishes a parallel, if not actually a connection, between them.[12]

Prosper's testimony apart, nothing concerning Palladius is known for certain. It is even disputable whether he was a deacon of the church of Auxerre or (as seems more likely) of the church of Rome.[13] Neither do we know any authentic detail of his Irish mission. Prosper's remark in *Contra Collatorem*[14] that Pope Celestine 'by consecrating a bishop for the Irish, while striving to preserve the Roman island [Britain] Catholic, made also the non-Roman island Chris-

10. (A.D. 429): 'Agricola Pelagianus, Severiani Pelagiani episcopi filius, ecclesias Britanniae dogmatis sui insinuatione corrumpit. Sed ad insinuationem Palladii diaconi papa Caelestinus Germanum Autisiodorensem episcopum vice sua mittit et deturbatis hereticis Britannos ad catholicam fidem dirigit'.
11. *Contra Collatorem*, XXI, 2.
12. If the 'druidic verses' in *Bethu Phátraic* (ed. Mulchrone, lines 338-350), or at least the first stanza, which was known to Muirchú, could be regarded as a genuine fifth-century piece of anti-Christian propaganda [cf. Travis, 'A druidic prophecy . . .', in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 57, 909-11 (1942)], one might explain them as a druidic reaction to the British events of 429. (Muirchú says they were recited during the two or three years preceding the arrival of Patrick, which, by implication, he dates to 432.) In that case the poem would have come down to us in a linguistically modernized form. It seems safer, however, to assume that it is a composition of the classical Old Irish period (private communication by Professor David Greene).
13. See Bieler, 'Interpretationes Patricianae', in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 107, 4-5 (Jan. 1967).
14. 'Ordinato Scottis episcopo dum Romanam insulam studet servare Catholicam fecit etiam barbaram Christianam'. Against Carney's interpretation of these words as referring to the Roman and non-Roman portion of Britain respectively, see Bieler, 'Patriciology' in *Seanchas Ardmhacha 1961-62*, 23-5; Binchy, *art. cit.*, 137-9.

tian' gives the impression that at the time when these words were written[15] Palladius was still successfully active in his mission field. There would be no problem here were it not for the fact that the Irish hagiographers of the seventh century introduced Palladius into their Lives of St Patrick. The basis on which this was done, and its possible relevance to the history of the two missionaries, will be discussed in the next section.

The year 431 is a landmark in Ireland's history. The island on which no Roman soldier had ever set foot was now a member of Rome's spiritual empire, the Roman Catholic Church. On the strictest interpretation of Prosper's terms, Palladius had been given no other task than to organize an Irish diocese out of a number of local Christian communities. He held no express brief for converting those parts of the country – and they must have been extensive – which were still pagan. However, if the mission of Palladius was not merely a temporary one,[16] and there is nothing in Prosper to suggest that this was the case, it would only be natural that Palladius, his first and immediate task accomplished, should promote, if not actually undertake, the conversion of those among the Irish to whom the Gospel had not yet been brought. Palladius had certainly not come alone. He would have arrived with a retinue of clerics of every grade, and possibly with other helpers as well. He would also have considered it a part of his task in Ireland to establish an apostolic succession. The needs of a growing Church for more clergy would, for some time at least, have to be supplied from abroad; and Gaul, from where a number of Palladius's original companions very probably came, would continue to respond to the call. At the same time, Britain would hardly have been inactive. This need not necessarily have resulted in one concerted effort. Considering the

15. Probably either 433 or 434. The late date assigned to *Contra Collatorem* by O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 20 ('437' – possibly an echo of Zimmer's '*before* 437': *op. cit.*, 579, note 1) is no longer maintained: see Bieler, 'The mission of Palladius: a comparative study of sources', in *Traditio* 6 10, note 13 (1948).
16. This possibility is considered by Grosjean, 'Notes d'hagiographie celtique', in *Anal. Bolland.* 63, 81-3 (1945).

political structure of ancient Ireland, there is every reason for believing that missionaries could have worked in different parts of the island without having contact.[17]

Of all this, needless to say, we know little or nothing. We do know, however, of one man who, following a divine call, made the conversion of the Irish his life-work. We know him on his own testimony. His name was Patricius.

ST PATRICK: THE SOURCES

In recent years the Apostle of Ireland has become a subject of so much learned controversy that it is impossible to give an account of his life and work without defining one's own position in the dispute. The personality of the man and saint stands before us as impressive and engaging as ever. It is his chronology, the details of his life and career, and his place in the conversion of Ireland to Christianity that pose problems which modern research has more often realized than solved. The nature of the evidence leaves a wide margin to interpretation, let alone speculation; and it is not surprising to find in the vast literature on St Patrick little, if any, agreement on even the most fundamental aspects of the question.[1] In the circumstances, a biographer of St Patrick can do no better than assess the evidence impartially, and interpret it in a way that accounts for as much of it as possible and does the least violence to the remainder. Any biography written on such a basis is bound to be tentative, provisional, and in some measure subjective.

In the interest of clarity it is proposed here to treat separately, first of the sources, then of the life and mission of St Patrick, and finally, of his personality.

17. See Binchy, *art. cit.*, 145.

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1. Charactieristically, Dr Binchy has chosen for the first chapter of his fundamental article 'Patrick and His Biographers' the title 'Discordant Voices'.

Leaving aside all that is either derivative or belongs to the literary development of the Patrick legend from the eighth century onwards, the sources for the history of St Patrick fall in two groups: the saint's own writings on the one hand, and the 'Patrician documents' of the seventh century and related material on the other.

As has long been agreed, the *Confessio* and *Epistola* that go under the name of 'Patricius, a bishop in Ireland', may safely be regarded as his genuine works. Nobody could have invented this strange mixture of divine praise and personal apology and defence, with fragments of biographical information interspersed, which are often obscure, never precise, and none the less consistent. Neither could anybody, and least of all an Irish writer of later times, have made up Patrick's unique Latin and personal style. Besides, a forger in Ireland (and where else was there a motive for such a forgery to be attempted?) would have done his best to represent the alleged author of his fabrication as a learned writer in the tradition of the Irish schools, and as a holy man who without a trace of weakness or failure has steadily gone from strength to strength. How little the two texts corresponded to the picture of St Patrick which the abbots of Armagh since the seventh century wished to propagate becomes evident the moment one confronts the *Patricius peccator* of the *Confessio* with the thaumaturgus of Muirchú and Tírechán. It is even arguable that the shortened text of the *Confessio* in the Book of Armagh and the absence from this manuscript of the *Epistola* are the work of deliberate censorship;[2] the missing sections of the former text, and the whole of the latter, were thought too frank an avowal of Patrick's human failings to be admissible in the official portrait of their patron saint.

Patrick wrote his Confession in his old age (*in senectute mea*),[3] that is, according to the reckoning of the ancients, as a man of sixty or more. His concluding words, 'And this is my confession before I die' need not imply that they were

2. Binchy, *art. cit.*, 41 f.
3. Conf. 10.

written in the shadow of death, but the author might well have felt his end approaching. The Letter is probably of earlier date than the Confession,[4] but even the former must be removed considerably in time from the beginning of Patrick's mission because in it he refers to a priest, apparently a native one, whom he had taught from childhood.[5]

Both documents are 'open letters'. The Confession is explicitly addressed to 'all faithful and God-fearing persons who may inspect it'.[6] However, in the course of his argument Patrick addresses particular groups of his critics, for example the 'learned clergymen' (*dominicati rethorici*) who despise his lack of education[7] or those of his converts who have accused him of simony.[8] Similarly the Letter, which is to be handed to the soldiers of the Welsh prince Coroticus,[9] is also to be circulated among his subjects at home[10] and to be read in the presence of Coroticus himself, who in one place is addressed in the singular.[11] Although Patrick sets out to write to a band of soldiers who had slaughtered a number of his newly-baptized and dragged the remainder into captivity, he becomes more and more preoccupied with the broader aspects of the incident. The outrageous act is a glaring example of the contempt in which his person and his divine vocation are held in his native country. Accordingly, his address changes as he goes along: to the British clergy (Ep. 10 f.), the Christians of Britain as a whole (Ep. 7, 13, 21), Coroticus in person (Ep. 14). So do his themes: the monstrosity of an attack on Christians by Christians, the plight of the victims who have been sold into slavery to Scots and

4. See especially Grosjean, 'Notes d'hagiographie celtique', in *Anal. Bolland*, 63, 100-111 (1945); Mohrmann, *The Latin of St Patrick*, Dublin 1961, 47. Père Grosjean thinks Patrick wrote his Confession in reply to a flare-up of hostile criticism against him in Britain after he had, virtually, demanded the excommunication of Coroticus.
5. Ep. 3.
6. Conf. 62.
7. Conf. 13.
8. Conf. 49 f.
9. Ep. 2.
10. Ep. 21.
11. Ep. 14.

Picts, a solemn declaration of solidarity with his flock, for whose salvation Patrick, son of a Roman *decurio*, had 'sold his freedom'. In the Confession the variety of themes is even greater. There are at least three major themes: a frank confession of his worldly and sinful youth, praise of God and thanksgiving for his guidance and graces that turned him into an instrument for the conversion of an alien nation, and, on the strength of his conviction that whatever he may have achieved was not his work but the action of divine grace, a justification of his Irish episcopate before his critics in Britain and elsewhere.[12] Patrick's defence is clearly modelled, in tone and even in language, on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians.[13] It is in the course of this spiritual argument that Patrick gives a number of details of an autobiographical nature. He dwells on them in so far as they had a spiritual significance for him, with little regard for factual clarity and precision, or for chronology. Besides, the whole argument unfolds by association rather than by logic, and the author's Latin, which is often strained or anacoluthic, adds to the difficulties of a student who is anxious to glean from these documents historical information.

Do we possess authentic pronouncements by Patrick beside these two texts? This question cannot be answered with absolute certainty. Three *Dicta Patricii* are prefixed to the Collections of Tírechán in the Book of Armagh. The first *Dictum* reads: 'The fear of God I had as my guide through Gaul and Italy and the islands in the Tyrrhene Sea'.[14] The second *Dictum*, 'From the world you have gone to paradise, thanks be to God'[15] is almost verbally identical with a phrase in the Letter (Ep. 17). The third one is difficult to interpret: 'Church of the Irish, nay, of the Romans, in order that you be Christians as are the Romans (or possibly: that you be

12. Certainly in Ireland, and possibly in Gaul.
13. See Nerney, 'A study of St Patrick's sources', in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 71, 499-507 (June 1949).
14. 'Timorem Dei habui ducem iteneris mei per Gallias atque Italiam, etiam in insolis quae sunt in mari Terreno'.
15. 'De saeculo requissistis (i.e., recessistis) ad paradissum. Deo gratias'.

Romans as well as Christians) you must sing in your churches at every hour of prayer that praiseworthy utterance: *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison.* Let every church that follows me sing: *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Deo gratias*'.[16]

The first of these 'sayings' was found by Tírechán[17] in a book of his master, Ultan, on which he drew in the initial section of his work. This book, to judge from Tírechán's extracts, contained much legendary matter as well as some potentially genuine detail. The other two 'sayings' are probably derived from the same source. The claim of the *Dicta* to being genuine can therefore be judged only in terms of intrinsic probability.

As regards the first *Dictum*, there is no *prima facie* case against it. Its language might well be Patrick's: *timorem Dei* is found in Conf. 18; with *ducem iteneris mei* compare Conf. 17 *Dei, qui uiam meam ad bonum dirigebat;* the plural *Gallias*, which had lost its meaning in Tírechán's time, was used by Patrick in Conf. 43. Such echoes could, of course, be due to imitation as are the words *cum sim exiguus et peccator et contemptibilis* (cf. Conf. 1) in a doubtless spurious letter of Patrick quoted by Jocelin. In Dr Binchy's view the *Dictum* 'would seem to be discounted by the fact that scholars . . . now reject the whole story of Patrick's sojourn in Lérins'.[18] However, the *Dictum* says nothing of either Lérins or a prolonged stay in any of the Tyrrhene islands. That Patrick's travels lasted for seven years is Tírechán's story (on the authority of Ultan's book, no doubt), and the additional information that Patrick spent thirty years in one of these islands called *Aralanensis* (identified with Lérins by some modern scholars) is attributed by Tírechán to Ultan personally. The case of the *Dictum* itself is not affected by this objection.

16. 'Aeclessia Scottorum immo Romanorum ut Christiani ita ut Romani sitis ut decantetur uobiscum oportet omni hora orationis uox illa laudabilis Curie lession Christe lession. Omnis aecl(esia) quae sequitur me cantet Cyrie lession Christe lession Deo gratias'.
17. Quoting this *Dictum* almost literally, Tírechán adds: 'ut ipse dixit in commemoratione laborum'. Tírechán seems to imply that the saying was taken from a larger context. *Commemoratio laborum* (an expression echoing Conf. 35) need not, of course, have been the title of the text in question.
18. *Art. cit.*, 43.

The second 'saying' consists of two elements: *Deo gratias*, which occurs often enough in the Confession and Letter to suggest that this ejaculation was constantly on Patrick's lips; and the words 'you have gone from the world to Paradise', a pious phrase of which the same might be presumed. If so, its occurrence in the Letter would not be surprising. It is equally possible, however, that the 'saying' was taken, with two very minor changes, from the Letter. However this may be, the *Dictum* adds nothing to our knowledge of St Patrick.

The case of the third *Dictum* is different. Whereas the first two 'sayings' were merely suspected, on grounds of insufficient credentials, by such critics as Karl Müller[19] and Wilhelm Levison,[20] the third one has been almost unanimously rejected.[21] I do not think the arguments against its authenticity are decisive. The fact that in the Confession and Letter the 'Romans' are always the citizens of the Roman Empire, whereas in the *Dictum* they are the Irish who have become Romans by their acceptance of Christianity,[22] presents no problem. For Patrick, the terms 'Christian' and 'Roman' meant much the same thing.[23] A more serious difficulty is raised by the recommendation of the *Kyrie eleison* and *Christe eleison*. Dr Binchy's argument that the *Kyrie eleison* 'was first introduced into the Western Church by Pope Gelasius (492-496), that is at least thirty years after the "official" date of Patrick's death',[24] is beside the point.[25] Dom B. Capelle maintained that Pope Gelasius introduced the *Kyrie* into the Roman Mass, but the *Dictum*

19. *Der heilige Patrick*, 90.
20. *Neues Archiv* 29, 170, note 4 (1903).
21. Grosjean, in *Anal. Bolland.* 52, 410 f. (1934), accepts only the opening words of the *Dictum*, 'Aeclessia Scottorum immo Romanorum', as genuine. In his opinion, these words form a separate saying.
22. So Müller, *op. cit.*, 90, note 2.
23. Cf. Ep. 2.
24. Binchy, *art. cit.*, 43.
25. See Bieler, *Life and Legend*, 129, note 14.

refers to the chanting of the *Kyrie* 'at every hour of prayer'. A certain *terminus ante quem* for the chanting of the *Kyrie* at Lauds and Vespers is provided by the third canon of the synod of Vaison (529),[26] but it remains uncertain how long the practice had existed before that date. In the opinion of Father Jungmann,[27] it was brought to the west by pilgrims to the Holy Land. Egeria, for example, who visited Palestine in (probably) 415-418, heard it sung in Jerusalem at Vespers.[28] More difficult to explain is perhaps the reference to *Christe eleison*, which is supposed to have been introduced into the Roman liturgy as late as the time of Pope Gregory the Great. However, Marius Victorinus, who wrote at Rome about 360, opens his second hymn[29] with the triple invocation *Miserere Domine, miserere Christe, miserere Domine*, and each stanza with the first two of these invocations, and thus in all probability testifies to some knowledge of the triple *Kyrie* in the Rome of his time. Linguistically, the Hibernicism *uobiscum* for *a uobis* (O.I. *lib*) is without parallel in either Confession or Letter. There certainly is at least one distinct Hibernicism in the Confession (*sugere mamellas*, 18), but this phrase, descriptive of an Irish rite, need not necessarily render the corresponding Irish idiom.

To sum up: the three *Dicta* were known as Patrick's by the middle of the seventh century, and possibly earlier. The second is substantially a phrase used by Patrick. The first *Dictum* might well be genuine, though the possibility that it is spurious cannot be categorically excluded. Of the third *Dictum* it may be said that there is no absolutely cogent argument for denying its authenticity. The source from which the three sayings are known is not of a kind to inspire confidence. Personally, I am inclined to give the first *Dictum* and the first part of the third the benefit of the doubt; the

26. Mansi, VIII, 727.
27. Private communication. To Fr Jungmann I owe also the references given in the next two footnotes.
28. *Peregrinatio Egeriae* [*Aetheriae*] 24, 5: 'Kyrie eleyson, quod dicimus nos: miserere, Domine'.
29. See Jungmann, *Missarum Sollemnia*, ed. 5, Freiburg 1962, I, 440, note 48.

larger second part of the latter I accept as potentially genuine, but with reservation.[29a]

We can be even less certain as regards two short phrases which are quoted as Patrick's in the Lives. The one, found, with minor variants, in Vita II and IV and in the Tripartite Life, says: 'I heard some [voices] singing psalms in me, and I do not know who they were'.[30] The other is quoted in Vita IV only, but expressly as from the *Liber epistolarum* of Patrick: 'I am Patrick, son of Kalfurnius, Concessa being my mother'. The name of Concessa is not found in Patrick's Confession, but might have been added at ch. 1 in the copy of the text on which Vita IV (or rather its source) depended,[31] just as the alleged name of Patrick's great-grandfather was added in the margin of the Armagh copy. In the case of the first fragment decision is more difficult. It might be an alternative of a phrase (or, possibly, a genuine bit of text) of Conf. 24, or it might refer to another, similar, experience which Patrick related in a letter now lost. The question must be left open. Even if accepted, the quotation would merely add another instance of a kind of experience which is described more than once in the Confession.

Reference may lastly be made to a letter which Patrick, according to a note in the Book of Armagh (presumably from the files of Tírechán),[32] sent to the bishops of Mag Ái, Caetiacus and Sacellus. In this account and in the parallel version of a Cottonian manuscript[33] Patrick is the well-known legendary figure of the seventh and later centuries. It is just possible that the story had its origin in a genuine letter, now lost, and that some phrases of that letter have

29a. A similar conclusion is reached by Marsh, *St Patrick and his Writings*, 6 (1966).
30. 'Audiui quosdam psallentes in me et nescio qui essent'.
31. The possibility that we have to do with a genuine fragment of a different letter, which I left open in my *Libri S. Patricii* I, 103 (1952), now seems to me hardly worth considering.
32. Fol. 9r, a. Cf. O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 28 f.; Grosjean, 'Notes sur les documents anciens concernant S. Patrice', in *Anal. Bolland.* 62, 44-6 (1944); O Fiaich, 'St Patrick and Armagh', in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 89, 165 f. (March 1958); Carney, *Problem*, 160-63; Binchy, 'Patrick and his Biographers', 43 f.
33. Otho E. xiii, fol. 132 b (tenth or eleventh century).

gone into the speech which the Cottonian version puts into Patrick's mouth.[34]

Of disputed authenticity also is a set of ecclesiastical canons decreed, according to their heading, by bishops Patricius, Auxilius, and Iserninus.[35] Todd,[36] Haddan and Stubbs,[37] and Dr Binchy[38] reject them *in toto*; Bury[39] accepted them as basically genuine, but admitted the possibility of interpolation.[40] I am of the same opinion, but suspect also some of the canons which Bury allowed to stand.[41]

If these accretions are eliminated, the remainder gives a picture of church life that is not yet quite settled. Elementary duties of clergy and laity alike have to be emphasized as things that are new and unfamiliar; it is even contemplated that a cleric may be unable to attend services because he is a slave! The ecclesiastical organization of the churches for which these canons were intended is clearly diocesan,[42] a

34. The prophecy 'Non magnae erunt aecclesiae uestrae' (Cott.: 'Ideo ecclesiae uestrae sint semper minimae') could not possibly have come from Patrick's letter. It is of exactly the same type as the prophecies which the Patrick of legend makes to secular rulers – cf. Binchy, *art. cit.*, 58 f.
35. Latest edition: Bieler, *The Irish Penitentials*, Dublin 1963, 54-9 (text and translation); 240 (notes).
36. *St Patrick, Apostle of Ireland*, Dublin 1864, 485 f.
37. *Councils and ecclesiastical documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, II, 2, 328-31 (1878).
38. 'Patrick and his Biographers', 45-9, 168.
39. *Life of St Patrick*, 233-45.
40. The one canon which in Bury's opinion (p. 244) might be later is 34 – the only one of Todd's 'suspects' (25, 30, 33, 34, and a clause in canon 6) against which there is a real case. See my article 'Patrick's Synod: a Revision' in *Mélanges Christine Mohrmann*, Utrecht 1963, 96-102, especially 99 f. (Inadvertently I, like Dr Binchy, have misread Bury at one point: he merely says that *if* Todd's arguments against the canons listed were valid, they would have to be considered interpolations.)
41. The principle applied by me is this: that portions of a text which are suspect on at least two different grounds (formal, linguistic, historical) must be considered interpolated. On these grounds I have declared canons 8, 11, 14, 15, and the last clauses of 24 and 34 respectively interpolated, and have stated an alteration in the beginning of 34, caused by the interpolation of a clause at the end. For details, see *Mélanges Christine Mohrmann*, 101 f.; 'Interpretationes Patricianae', in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 107, 9 f. (Jan. 1967).
42. On the special character of this early diocesan organization of the Church in Ireland see below, p. 89 ff. It is, however, interesting to note that the long

state of affairs that did not survive the sixth century. A number of *formulae* have close parallels in the acts of councils and synods in fifth- and early sixth-century Gaul;[43] some of these are either rare or non-existent in the Irish penitential texts of later date.[44] Canon 18, which forbids penitents to enter the church even at the Easter Vigil, is in the ancient penitential tradition, and in contrast with the later Irish practice.[45]

A fifth-century date of these Irish canons, as is implied by the names of their signatories, may thus be argued. In annalistic terms,[46] the 'synod' of the three bishops would fall after the arrival in Ireland of Auxilius and Iserninus (439)[47] and before the death of the former (459).[48] I think it

first chapter of the *Collectio Hibernensis* (eighth century), which deals with bishops, makes no mention of territorial dioceses.
43. E.g., *excommonis sit* (seven times) – *habeantur excommunes* II Arles 30 (29); *alienus sit* or *habeatur* (four times) – *alienus fiat* or *habeatur* Tours (a. 461) 3.11; II Arles 3.14; c. 6 *pariter a laicis contempnentur et ab ecclesia separentur* – cf. II Arles 31 (30) *excommunicatione omnium et detestatione dignus habeatur;* c. 10, 22 *ab ecclesia excludendus, excludantur – ab ecclesia excludatur* II Arles 47; c. 6.26 *ab ecclesia separentur, sequestrentur – a conuentu ecclesiae separandum* Stat. Eccl. Antiqua 83; c. 28 *nec offerre nec consecrare ei licet* – cf. Tours (a. 461), c. 2 *neque sacrificium Deo offerre uel Deo ministrare praesumat;* c. 17 *donec conuertatur*, c. 28 *donec se faciat emendatum* – cf. II Arles c. 49 *donec resipiscens ad sanitatem redire festinet.*
44. The formula *alienus sit* (*habeatur*) is rare in the Irish penitentials, the word *excommonis* is not found there at all.
45. Cf. the seventh-century 'Second Synod of St Patrick', c. 22, ed. Bieler, *The Irish Penitentials*, 192.
46. On the unreliability of the early annalistic dates see below, p. 29 ff.
47. Even within the analistic framework, it seems doubtful whether a later *terminus a quo* may be seen in the obit of Secundinus, 447, who is not represented as present at that meeting. That this was a meeting of all the bishops then active in Ireland is a gratuitous assumption.
48. It has been suggested by me – '"Patrick and the Kings": apropos a new chronology of St Patrick', in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 85, 188 (March 1956) – that the date of the 'synod' might be 457, and that a mistaken reference to it (*sen Patr=senodus Patricii*) might be the ultimate source of the analistic entry *quies senis Patricii* in AU under that year. Dr Binchy's criticism (*art. cit.*, 45, note 110) does not, I think, affect my argument. The misunderstanding would have occurred long before the earliest stock of the Irish annals in its present form was compiled; its result was found by the compiler in one of his annalistic sources, and was, quite understandably, taken by him as an alternative date of the 461 obit. I note that in AU the *senodus* (same spelling in AI) *Calcedonensis* is entered also under 457.

most likely, with Bury,[49] that these canons were agreed upon at a meeting of Patrick with the missionaries in the south of Ireland, the purpose of which would have been the co-ordination of their efforts. The great difference in style between this document and the genuine writings of St Patrick could then be easily explained on the assumption that the canons were drawn up by one of the two Leinster missionaries, and merely sanctioned by Patrick.[50]

A provision recorded in the Book of Armagh (fol. 21 v, b) to the effect that all disputes should be brought before the see of Armagh and that from the authority of its *praesul* there was appeal only to the Apostolic See, is hardly, as was assumed by Eóin MacNeill and previously by me, a genuine canon. This 'canon' is the last of nine items, setting forth claims of prerogative on the part of Armagh, which form the last section of the 'Book of the Angel'.[51] Apart from the context in which this provision is found, suspicion is aroused by the names of its joint 'signatories' (in this order): Auxilius, Patricius, Secundinus, Benignus.[52]

With the 'Patrician documents' in the Book of Armagh (the shortened text of the *Confessio* excepted)[53] we are in a different world. As they stand, these texts cannot be described as documents either in the legal meaning of the term or in the sense of historical or biographical evidence. Among them we find hagiographical legend (Muirchú's Life of St Patrick),

49. *Life of St Patrick*, 233 f.
50. I do not think one need go as far as to assume that these canons were decreed for Leinster only, by the bishops Auxilius and Iserninus, and that the name of Patrick was later added – a suggestion made to me in private by Rev. Professor Corish.
51. See below, p. 19.
52. See Bieler, *The Works of St Patrick*, 14, and more fully and cogently, Binchy, *art. cit.*, 49-51.
53. Edited by Hogan, in *Anal. Bolland.* 1, 545-85 (1882); 2, 35-68, 213-38 (1883); separately under the title *Documenta de S. Patricio*, 17-121. See also Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, Dublin 1913, Introduction, xvii-lxxvii; Grosjean, 'Analyse du Livre d'Armagh', in *Anal. Bolland.* 62, 34-41 (1944); Bieler, *Life and Legend*, 41-5, 'The Lives of St Patrick and the Book of Armagh', in *Thomas Davis Lectures: St Patrick*, 1958, 53-66; O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks, passim;* Binchy, 'Patrick and his Biographers', 55-69.

instruments of the ecclesiastical policy of Armagh, by which the 'heirs of Patrick', from the seventh century onwards, strove to extend their jurisdiction over all Ireland and thus to establish the primacy of their see (*Liber Angeli*, *Additamenta* to Tírechán, *Notulae*),[54] and a mixture of both (Tírechán's *Breviarium*). Their evidential value depends entirely on the material used and the use made thereof.

The 'Book of the Angel' is a straightforward statement of claims, both territorial and juridical, set in the hagiographical framework of an angel telling Patrick that these privileges had been granted to his church by God. This grant includes the extension of the narrow *terminus* (the actual territory) of Armagh, the promise that all the tribes of the Irish shall belong to Patrick as his *paruchia* (diocese), and a number of personal prerogatives of the *praesul* of Patrick's 'city', such as the right to hospitality, the right of 'overswearing', or (as already mentioned) the recognition of Armagh as the highest court of appeal in the country. Most scholars (O'Rahilly, Carney, Binchy) now hold that this 'document' existed before the time of Tírechán and was known to him.[55]

Tírechán, a native of Tirawley, was a disciple of Bishop Ultan of Ardbraccan in Meath. He apparently compiled his *Breviarium* after his master's death (AU 657), and probably after the 'mortalities' of 664;[55a] on internal evidence, he seems to have written before Muirchú. He wrote with a view to providing the documentary basis for the claims of Armagh as stated in the 'Book of the Angel', according to which Armagh may lay claim to every 'free' church (i.e., one that does not belong to a monastic *paruchia*), on every *civitas ab aepiscopali gradu* (according to Dr Binchy's plaus-

54. In Zimmer's opinion (*Handelsverbindungen*, 545 ff., 602 ff.), the Patrick legend was invented by the pro-Roman party in seventh-century Ireland in order to create a counterpart to the conversion of England by Roman initiative. This might at best have been a subsidiary motive.
55. The post-Tírechán date ('c. 700') suggested by me in 'The Celtic Hagiographer', in *Studia Patristica* 5, 252 f. (1962)) refers only to the agreement of Patrick and Brigit (i.e., of Armagh and Kildare) concerning their respective *paruchiae*, which forms an appendix to the main text.
55a. Hanson, *St Patrick, a British missionary Bishop* (Nottingham 1965) 5 f. decides, without giving his reasons, for the plague of 683.

ible explanation, churches that were incorporated in a monastic *paruchia* believed to have originally been episcopal), and on every church that was called *domnach* (and not *cell*).[56] In other words, all churches outside the existing monastic *familiae* should be deemed to be Patrician churches, and were to be organized in a large *paruchia* under the jurisdiction of Armagh. Obviously not all the churches falling in one or another of these categories were actually founded by St Patrick. Tírechán's survey would inevitably include pre-Patrician churches as well as the foundations of Patrick's fellow-missionaries, of his disciples, and of other men of the next generation or even of later date. On the other hand, the majority of genuine Patrician churches would doubtless be among them. The greater part of Tírechán's compilation consists of matter-of-fact lists of grants made to Patrick by local kings and land-owners, of the churches he built there, and of the clergy he ordained and appointed to his foundations. He is often opposed by druids, whose magic must yield to his miraculous powers. He blesses the kings who receive him and promises kingship to their posterity, and curses those whom he finds hostile. The rather monotonous series of such and similar incidents is occasionally relieved by a more elaborate story: miracles such as the raising of a giant from death[57] or the story of the cross on the tomb of a pagan,[58] which are in the tradition of the hagiographical genre, or the poetical account of the conversion of King Láegaire's daughters at Clebach.[59] The arrangement is geographical: conforming to the native taste in saga,[60] Tírechán makes Patrick tour the northern half of Ireland in a large circuit, starting from Tara through Meath, Connacht, the territory of the Northern Uí Néill, and the north-western coast back to his starting point; a second circuit, through the southern part of the country, breaks off at

56. Fol. 21r, b.
57. Cf. Carney, *Problem*, 142 ff.
58. A somewhat similar story is told about St Martin, Sulpicius Severus, *Vita S. Martini*, c. 11. Cf. Bieler, *Theios Aner* 1, 120 (1935).
59. Cf. Bieler, *Life and Legend*, 98, 113; Carney, *Problem*, 127-37.
60. Binchy, 'Patrick and his Biographers', 65.

Cashel. There follow a number of miscellaneous paragraphs, relating to St Patrick and to his cult at Armagh. The main portion of the work is divided into two books, the first comprising St Patrick's 'acts' in Meath, the second those in Connacht and elsewhere. For some of the contents of the first book Tírechán refers to his elders, in particular to his master Ultan and to a book in Ultan's possession,[61] but he tells us nothing about his sources for the remainder. It stands to reason that much of it was derived from local tradition, transformed already in a way characteristic of legend and saga.[62] The names of the local magnates who granted land for the building of churches, and the names of their first incumbents, especially if they were Irish, would on the whole have a good chance of being correctly remembered. We are, however, no longer in a position to decide whether a particular detail is genuine. Even so conservative a scholar as Eóin MacNeill has held that not a little of Tírechán's account can be shown to contain figments of his own invention.[63]

The way in which Tírechán obtained his material can only be guessed. A number of churches which had already submitted to Armagh, as did Tírechán's native Tirawley[64] or, before the end of the century, Sletty in Leinster, might voluntarily tender information; in the case of others, for example those churches which, as Tírechán complains, were alienated and annexed by the great monastic *familiae*, local people might have been consulted on the spot. The stylistic inequality of the *Breviarium* possibly reflects to some extent the use of written sources on the one hand and the recording, in the compiler's unadorned style, of local traditions on the other. The material was probably filed in a provisional topographical order, and these files were indexed. Some such procedure can certainly be inferred from the collection

61. Fol. 9r, b; 11r, b. Cf. Bieler, *Life and Legend*, 42, 'The Lives of St Patrick and the Book of Armagh', in *Thomas Davis Lectures: St Patrick*, 1958, 58.
62. This much even Dr Binchy would consider – cf. *art. cit.*, 66 f. In principle, I have never claimed more.
63. 'The other Patrick', in *Studies* 32, 313 (1943).
64. See fol. 10v, b, and Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, Introduction, lii.

of additional material, made with a view to supplementing Tírechán, which has been preserved in part in the so-called *Additamenta* in the Book of Armagh[65] and was subsequently worked into the Tripartite Life, and from the *Notulae* in the same manuscript, which, in the plausible opinion of Père Grosjean, are an incomplete index to such files.[66] The paragraph on Mag Ái which has already been mentioned, but which was not inserted in the *Breviarium*, may be regarded as a stray piece of Tírechán's files.[67]

Muirchú moccu Machtheni was a cleric of the church of Sletty, whose bishop, Aed, had submitted his church to Armagh, and died there as a hermit in about 700. He commissioned Muirchú to write a Life of St Patrick, and this work, or at least the first book of it, was completed in Aed's lifetime. Muirchú claims to be the first to write a formal *Vita* of St Patrick, and to be second only to his teacher Cogitosus (apparently the well-known author of a Life of St Brigit) in attempting a hagiographical *Vita* of any Irish saint. In contrast to Tírechán, Muirchú gives proof of literary ambitions. Here, however, we are concerned only with the historical value of his work. In his preface[68] Muirchú tells us that many had endeavoured to connect the traditions of the 'fathers' concerning St Patrick in an orderly narrative, but, so he remarks, they differed widely from one another. It seems reasonable to assume that this summary reference includes Ultan and, possibly, Tírechán;[69] about other efforts we cannot be sure.[70] Muirchú's principal

65. Fol. 16r, b – 18v, b.
66. Fol. 18v, b – 19r, b. See Grosjean, 'Notes sur les documents anciens concernant S. Patrice', in *Anal. Bolland.* 62, 66-70 (1944); Bieler, 'The *Notulae* in the Book of Armagh', in *Scriptorium* 8, 89-97 (1954).
67. Similar material, relating to the acts of St Patrick in Connacht, is embedded in the Life of St Benignus – *Acta SS*, Nov. IV, 170-86.
68. Fol. 20r, a.
69. See Bieler, *Life and Legend*, 42 f., 'The Lives of St Patrick and the Book of Armagh', in *Thomas Davis Lectures: St Patrick*, 1958, 56.
70. *Vita Tripartita*, 634 (ed. Mulchrone), lists among others Colum Cille, Adomnán and Heleran, beside Ultan, as collectors of the miracles of Patrick. The case of Colum Cille is summarily dismissed by Dr Binchy (*art. cit.*, 56); neither is anything known in this connection about Adomnán and Aileran.

source for his first and third book[71] was probably the *plana historia* of St Patrick to which Tírechán refers his readers, and from which apparently he reproduces the *novissima mirabilia*, 'in the fifth year of Laegaire's reign', that is, the last episodes of the text. This *plana historia* I believe to have been a rudimentary *Vita*, based on the biographical data of the Confession and on certain other materials. The second book of Muirchú consists of a number of separate miracle-stories, including a fantastic transformation of the Coroticus incident; they are arranged on the principle of variation. Some of these possibly have a basis in local tradition. The frame in which these single stories are set covers Patrick's life from his early days to his first Irish Easter at Tara, and then, after a reference to his 'diligence in prayer', which Muirchú illustrates with some miracles, goes on to an account of his death and burial. The latter, to begin at the end, has a distinctly Irish background. It introduces a bishop Tassach, who plays no other role in the Patrick legend than to administer to him the last sacraments, and it refers to a dispute about the possession of Patrick's body between the Ulaid and the Airgialla.[72] The events from Patrick's landing in Ireland as a missionary to his obtaining Laegaire's permission to preach in Ireland[73] are in all probability a seventh-century fabrication, reflecting the analogous interests of the

No Life of St Patrick was known to Jonas of Bobbio, who wrote his *Vita S. Columbani* in 640-41: see Zimmer, *op. cit.* 544, note 1.
71. It is almost certain that Muirchú's Life was originally divided into three books: see Bieler, 'Studies on the Text of Muirchú', in *R.I.A. Proc.* 52, sect. c, 179-220 (1949); 'The Vienna fragments and the tradition of Muirchú's text, *ibid.* 59, sect. c, 181-95 (1959).
72. On the possible historical background of Patrick's death on Ulidian soil see Binchy, *art. cit.*, 154, and below, p. 94. The only other mention made of Tassach is in the list of Patrick's 'household' at the end of the Tripartite Life (in the Egerton MS. only), where he is introduced, together with Essa and Bite, as one of Patrick's three craftsmen ('a trí cerda').
73. The common source seems here preserved by Tírechán; Muirchú not only deviates in detail, but also inserts a long visit to the north almost immediately after Patrick's landing. Tírechán is not more 'historical' than Muirchú, but he does, in my opinion, represent the more original version of the account.

Tara dynasty and of Armagh.[74] The early section, which tells of Patrick's life from his captivity at the age of sixteen to his dream of vocation, as has already been remarked, is ultimately derived from the Confession. There remain the years of Patrick's ecclesiastical formation, and the account of these must be considered in detail.

The story is well known.[75] Patrick, convinced of his vocation, intends to go to Rome to study for the priesthood there, but on his way through Gaul he is attracted by the fame of Bishop Germanus of Auxerre and becomes his pupil for a period of thirty or forty years. At the end of that time, he is urged by visions to return to the Irish, he is dispatched by Germanus, together with a priest, Segitius, as 'witness and suitable companion', apparently to Ireland, where Palladius had been sent as bishop by Pope Celestine. This mission, however, is unsuccessful, and Palladius dies, either as a martyr in Ireland or on his way to Rome. (According to the Second and Fourth Life, and the Tripartite, Palladius founded three churches in co. Wicklow: Cellfine, which had his writing tablets, Domnach Arte, where his companions Silvester and Solonius were buried, and Tech na Roman, a foundation of his disciples.[75a]) At Ebmoria [Eboria, Euboria, Curbia], Patrick and his companions (now in the plural!) learn about the death of Palladius from his disciples Augustinus and Benedictus. They betake themselves to a bishop named Amathorex 'who resided in the vicinity'. Amathorex consecrates Patrick a bishop and confers minor orders on Auxilius and Iserninus. After this Patrick, without further delay, sets out for Ireland.

O'Rahilly was the first to point out that this story must be based on a record of the church of Auxerre, a copy of which

74. Binchy, *art. cit.*, 59 ff.; Kelleher, 'Early Irish history and pseudo-history', in *Studia Hibernica* 3, 126 (1963).
75. Our main witness is Muirchú, I, 5-9. Some details not related by Muirchú would seem to have been preserved by the common source of the Tripartite Life and the Latin Lives II and IV.
75a. The reference to 'three wooden churches' of Palladius by the Four Masters (under 430) is evidently derived from the Patrick Legend.

some Irish cleric brought home from the continent.[76] This document was evidently 'doctored' at Armagh, but it is hard to say to what extent.[77] Dr Binchy dismisses not only the Auxerre traditions, but Patrick's ecclesiastical training anywhere in Gaul as, to say the least, most doubtful. He admits, however, that, if Père Grosjean's tentative identification of 'Ebmoria' with Eburobriga (Avrolles, eighteen miles north-east of Auxerre) were confirmed, he 'would feel bound to revise his opinion'.[78] Muirchú (or, for that matter, his Irish source) could indeed not be expected to know of an obscure place-name in the heart of Gaul unless he found it in a genuine source.[79] There is in this account at least one other name which is most unlikely to have been introduced by an Irish hagiographer, that of the priest Segitius (Segetius) – a name recorded only twice in Latin prosopography.[80] Rare also is the name of Palladius's companion Solonius.[81] On the other hand, the names of the 'Palladian' churches were evidently supplied by the Irish redactor, together with the pseudo-etymology of *pallere* (*polaire=pugillares*) as *onus Palladii*. The churches may well have existed in the seventh century, but their connection with either Palladius or his disciples is not considered a genuine tradition.[82] Obviously tendentious is the denigration of Palladius in order to make

76. O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 16 ff. claims this document for his 'elder Patricius', i.e., Palladius. However, to mention only this, Auxerre was the least likely place for Palladius to have been known as Patricius, if ever this was his second name.
77. See Bieler, 'Patriciology', in *Seanchas Ardmhacha 1961-62*, 29-31.
78. *Art. cit.*, 85.
79. Bury, *op. cit.*, 347, note 1, would equate Ebmoria with Ebroica, 'Evreux' (cf. 'Notitia Galliarum', *M.G.H., Auct. Antiquissimi* IX, 585), a place much better known, though not from Prosper or similar sources. This, however, implies a rather unlikely route for anyone travelling from Auxerre to the channel ports.
80. The only two references in the *Thesaurus* material are to *CIL*, XI, 1711 and *Ephemeris epigraphica* 8, 425, n. 163.
81. See Bieler, 'The mission of Palladius: a comparative study of sources', in *Traditio* 6, 19, note 9 (1948).
82. Cf. O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 14. Judgment might have to be revised, however, if the Roman relics said to have been deposited by Palladius at Cellfine could, in their majority, be identified with those at Armagh.

him the dark foil for the bright figure of his successor. Suspect also is the detail that Auxilius and Iserninus received minor orders on the occasion of Patrick's episcopal consecration; it might have been inspired by the same motive as the annalistic remark that when they arrived as bishops in Ireland (AU, AI 439) they came merely as auxiliaries. There is finally the bishop by whom Patrick was consecrated: Amat(h)orex.[83] It is difficult not to regard this name as either a corruption or, possibly, a 'Celticization' of the name of Germanus's predecessor in the see of Auxerre, Amator.[84] I still think the best explanation is to assume that Patrick returned to Auxerre and was consecrated there *ad sanctum Amatorem*, which was misunderstood by the Irish redactor.[85]

From the same source must be derived Ultan's comment on the first *Dictum Patricii*, that for thirty years the saint stayed on one of the 'islands in the Tyrrhene Sea', named *insula Aralanensis*. The emendation *Lerinensis*, though often proposed, does not recommend itself for a number of reasons.[86] This statement is part of the Auxerre tradition; in its original form[87] it was to the effect that Patrick studied under Germanus in that *insula*. The identification by Professor René Louis[88] of this place-name with an island in the river Yonne, opposite Auxerre, where St Germanus had

83. The name-form *Mathorex*, which is postulated by Louis ('St Patrick's sojourn in Auxerre and the problem of the Insula Aralanensis', in *Seanchas Ardmhacha 1961-62*, 39) as the name of some Celtic bishop, is found only once in the Armagh text of Muirchú, and not in the place where this person is first mentioned; the respective chapter-heading also reads *ab Amathorege*.
84. So, e.g., Levison (*Neues Archiv* 29, 171 (1903)). He considers, however, the possibility that Amathorex might be a corruption of some unknown bishop's name (*ibid.*, 359). Cf. Marsh, *op. cit.*, 15: 'There is no need for them (i.e. Amator and Amathorex) to have been the same'.
85. So, following Zimmer, Père Grosjean and myself. One need not necessarily think of the Basilica of St Amator, which, as Père Grosjean was to point out later ('Notes d'hagiographie celtique', in *Anal. Bolland.* 75, 166 f. (1957)), did not yet exist in St Germanus's time. Surely the ceremony could have taken place at St Amator's tomb.
86. See the summing-up by Dr Binchy, *art. cit.*, 89 f.
87. See above, note 75.
88. 'Le séjour de Saint Patrice à Auxerre', in *Mélanges Louis Halphen*, 445-51; 'St Patrick's sojourn in Auxerre and the problem of the Insula Aralanensis', in *Seanchas Ardmhacha, 1961-2*, 37-44.

founded a monastery,[89] allows us to make sense of an otherwise incongruous statement.

However much or little of the Auxerre story may be true, it does, in my opinion, testify to a genuine link of St Patrick with Auxerre and St Germanus. In this light must then be read St Patrick's two references to Gaul (Conf. 43, Ep. 14), which in themselves would not be unambiguous evidence of his sojourn in that country.[90] We shall have to come back to this question when interpreting the difficult chapters in the Confession in which Patrick obscurely refers to a grave crisis in his life.

To sum up: The seventh-century Patrician documents are demonstrably written in the interest of the ecclesiastical, and perhaps also the secular, politics of their time. Except where they are based on the genuine works of St Patrick, their evidence must be received with the greatest caution. The information on which their authors relied, whether it was written or oral, is at best potentially genuine as far as the names of persons and places connected with church foundations are concerned, and even in these matters allowance must be made for the inclusion of much that is either pre- or post-Patrician. The only source that seems genuine is an Auxerre document testifying to St Patrick's sojourn in that place, but it is uncertain how much of it was preserved truthfully in the Irish hagiographical tradition through which alone we know it.

Some other 'Patrician' texts, all poetical, can be mentioned here only in passing. There is, first of all, the *Lorica* ('Breastplate') of St Patrick. This beautiful Old Irish morning prayer was later credited with special powers of protecting those who would recite it. In the Tripartite Life we read that Patrick recited it, with miraculous effect, on his way to Tara. Its language is dated as of the eighth century by Celtic scholars, but, in the opinion of the late Dr M. A. O'Brien, some features of the poem – syntactical, metrical, and

89. Constantius, *Vita S. Germani* 6 (*M.G.H. Script. rer. Merov.* VII, 254, 1 ff.).
90. See Binchy, *art. cit.*, 81.

textual – are considerably more archaic.[91] However, the thesis that it was actually composed by St Patrick would be very difficult to maintain.[92]

The Old Irish hymn *Genair Pátraic*, which probably dates from the middle of the eighth century, is dependent almost entirely on Muirchú. Only its last verse, in which mention is made of the 'other Patrick', bears on the Patrician problem.[93]

Of greater importance, and more controversial, is the Latin hymn *Audite omnes*, which is ascribed to St Secundinus, one of the early missionary bishops in this country, in the *Liber Hymnorum* (eleventh century), but not in the earliest copy, the Antiphonary of Bangor, which was written between 680 and 691.[94] If Secundinus, whose annalistic obit is 447, were really its author, or if a date within Patrick's lifetime could be argued on other grounds, this hymn, although it contains no factual details beyond those known from St Patrick's writings, would be important evidence of the impression made by the saint on one of his fellow missionaries, and, as Père Grosjean believes, might be understood as a voice raised in Patrick's defence against his critics. The hymn has been considered a contemporary document by Eóin MacNeill,[95] Père Grosjean,[96] and myself;[97] Professor Carney[98] and Dr Binchy[99] would date it of c. 600

91. 'It may not go back to Patrick, but I am certain it was originally composed at a very early time and then handed down orally': communication quoted by me in *The Works of St Patrick*, 104.
92. Professor David Greene writes to me (19 Feb. 1964): 'I once ventured the suggestion that this ("translation" of a fifth century poem into classical Old Irish) might have been the case with the *Lorica* but I would not try to maintain that position now'.
93. See below, p. 41.
94. The attribution to Secundinus would appear to have first been made between c. 680 and the *Félire* of Oengus (c. 800).
95. 'The Hymn of St Secundinus in honour of St Patrick', in *I.H.S.* 2, 129-53 (Sept. 1940).
96. 'Notes d'hagiographie celtique', in *Anal. Bolland.* 63, 110 f. (1945).
97. 'The Hymn of Secundinus', in *R.I.A. Proc.* 55, sect. c, 117-27 (1953) – critical text with introduction and commentary.
98. *S.I.L.H.*, 399-402; *Problem*, 40-46.
99. *Art. cit.*, 52-5.

or even later. In my present opinion, no absolutely cogent argument has been produced on either side. It seems best to leave the question as it stands; our knowledge of St Patrick will not be affected materially by its outcome.

A set of entries, relating to Palladius, Patrick, and the missionary period in Ireland, is found in the Irish annals. These entries form part of the common stock of the Irish annals, which was reproduced, with certain omissions, additions, verbal changes, chronological shifts, and alternative datings, in the several annalistic texts that have survived. The historical value of this annalistic tradition has been assessed very differently by students of early Irish history. MacNeill and O'Rahilly considered them the most trustworthy evidence in existence (though they would allow for errors as regards individual entries); Carney accepted their evidence basically, but assumed that at one time certain dates referring to fifth-century kings of Tara and some of the dates referring to Patrick had been shifted back more than twenty years; Kelleher and Binchy place no confidence whatsoever in the early annalistic dates, but would admit that even this section of the annals contains a fair amount of potentially genuine information. In particular, the native entries in the second half of the fifth and the first half of the sixth century, which will come in for consideration in this context, are, in a general way, supported by the genealogies, and, even though not a single one need be accurate, they would seem to be reliable cumulatively in terms of generations.[100]

The question turns largely on our ideas concerning the ultimate sources of these annals and the way in which the latter (or at least their common early portion) were compiled. The (approximate) date of these basic annals is conjectural. MacNeill's theory that Prosper's Chronicle was continued in Ireland year by year down to c. 607 has been almost

100. See O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks, passim; Early Irish History and Mythology*, 236-59; Carney, *S.I.L.H.*, 324 ff.; Binchy, *art. cit.*, 70-75; Kelleher, 'Early Irish history and pseudo-history', in *Studia Hibernica* 3, 122-6 (1963).

unanimously rejected.[101] O'Rahilly[102] assumed that the period 431–c. 740 is based on an Ulster chronicle, originating possibly from Bangor, and that to this source was later (not before the ninth century) prefixed an Irish 'World Chronicle'. Both would have drawn largely on the Latin chronicles of late antiquity and on Bede, the 'World Chronicle' also on such pseudo-historical compilations as Lebor Gabála. In O'Rahilly's opinion, it is only from the time of compilation of this Ulster Chronicle (c. 740) onwards, that contemporary entries were made year by year in the several local continuations of the basic text. More radical is the theory of Professor Kelleher,[103] which has been endorsed by Dr Binchy.[104] Kelleher believes it can be shown 'that everything in the annals up to about 590 and a large number of entries from thence to 735 (obit of Bede) were either freshly composed or wholly revised not earlier than the latter half of the ninth century'.[105] These 'Irish World Annals', beginning with the Flood, are all of a piece; the division made at 431 is 'merely editorial and quite late'. This compilation has entirely replaced the original annalistic texts up to about 590 and has heavily overlaid them from c. 590 to c. 735. The revision was undertaken in the common interests of the Uí Néill and of Armagh, i.e., in support of their respective claims to the 'high-kingship' and the primacy of Ireland. Even the fifth- and sixth-century entries presumably contain much genuine material, but in view of the extensive revision, rearrangement, and interpolation to which it has been subjected Kelleher doubts whether 'we shall ever be able confidently to separate the real from the false'.

It is impossible to judge this theory before it has been stated in greater detail and with full documentation. That a 'revision' of early Irish history in the joint interests of

101. See Thurneysen in *Z.C.P.* 10, 396 f. (1914); van Hamel, *ibid.*, 17, 259 f. (1928); Carney, *S.I.L.H.*, 357, note 1.
102. *Two Patricks*, 12; *Early Irish History and Mythology*, 253.
103. *Art. cit.*, 122, 125.
104. 'Patrick and his Biographers', 73 f.
105. For a sceptical view of this 'ninth-century revision' see Byrne, 'The Ireland of St Columba', in *Historical Studies* V, 52, note 6 (1965).

Armagh and the Uí Néill was at some time undertaken seems more than likely. These common interests, however, must have existed as early as the seventh century, since the most striking manifestation of this alliance, Patrick's visit to Tara and his dealings with the 'high-king' Laegaire and his druids, is told by Muirchú and, in a rudimentary form, by Tírechán, and was probably contained already in their common source.[106]

The nature of the original material on which this revision was imposed is also disputed. The question is this: to what extent, and from what time onwards, do the annalistic entries rely on contemporary Irish records? Hand in hand with this goes the other question: what form would such records have taken? In the absence of consular *Fasti*, two possible systems of reference can be suggested: (a) paschal tables, and (b) some late-antique chronicles brought to Ireland by successive missionaries and continued, since consular dating would hardly have been possible and would certainly have been impracticable, by marking each new year with a *Kl*, standing for the Kalends of January. It has been generally assumed that such entries were made on paschal tables. This practice, as Dr Binchy observes,[107] cannot have been earlier than 500, and may be considerably later.[108] On the other hand, I see no intrinsic improbability in the assumption that copies of late-antique chronicles were continued in Ireland from the beginning of the official Irish mission or shortly after.[109] It is by no means necessary to date such an activity as late as 'the existence of a settled monastic or quasi-monastic community'.[110] The early missionaries, with their imperial background, would be familiar

106. There is some evidence to show that about the end of the sixth century the Armagh district had come under the direct rule of the Northern Uí Néill, see Green, *History of the Irish State to 1014*, 302; Binchy, *art. cit.*, 170 f.
107. *Art. cit.*, 71 and note 185.
108. Cf. Levison-Wattenbach, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter*, I, 57 f.
109. That a copy of Prosper's chronicle was known in Ireland from an early time onwards is assumed by both O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 56, note 22 and, with greater reservation, by Binchy, *art. cit.*, 83.
110. So Binchy, *art. cit.*, 71.

with keeping brief records of events which concerned them either directly or indirectly, and some of them, if not all, would continue to do so in their new surroundings, and pass on the practice to their successors. It has to be admitted, however, that no early annalistic entry can be proved to depend on a contemporary record of any sort.

The issue does not bear directly on the 'Patrician' entries because most of them can be shown not to be of a genuine annalistic character.[111] Leaving aside for the moment the obits of Patrick and of persons connected with Patrick in his legend, the following entries must, for one reason or another, be suspected:

431: the mission of Palladius. This is, of course, basically the entry in the Chronicle of Prosper, but with one significant change: Palladius is not sent to 'the Irish believing in Christ', but to the Irish in general, 'in order that they might believe in Christ' (*ut Christum credere potuissent*). The impression is thus created that Ireland was entirely pagan before the arrival of Palladius. One cannot help feeling that this change was made not *ad gloriam Palladii*, but *ad gloriam Patricii*, whose mission, according to these annals, began in the following year. This latter date will be discussed below, together with the several obits of Patrick.

433: (AI only) conversion of the Irish to the Christian faith. Whatever the exact meaning of this entry,[112] it is clearly an inference from that under 432, its logical sequel.

438: (AU and Chron. Scott.) the Senchas Már was written. As was seen already by Bury, the reference is probably to the promulgation of the Codex Theodosianus, which fell in this year.[113]

111. See Bieler, 'Patriciology', in *Seanchas Ardmhacha 1961-62*, 20 f.
112. It might well refer to Patrick's celebration of his first Easter, the assumption being that he arrived in the summer or autumn of the preceding year.
113. The legend of a Christian revision of Irish law, which I substantially accepted in my *Life and Legend* (89, 138 f.), has been convincingly exposed by Dr Binchy, *art. cit.*, 20 f.

441: (AU, abridged in AI) 'Leo was ordained forty-second (read: forty-third) bishop of Rome, and Bishop Patrick was approved in the Catholic faith'. Dr Binchy[114] and I[115] agree that the words *probatus est in fide catolica Patricius episcopus* are most probably an echo of St Patrick's words (Conf. 30): *fides mea probata est coram Deo et hominibus*, which in their context do not refer to any canonical act.

443: 'Bishop Patrick flourishing in the ardour of faith and the doctrine of Christ in our province'. A *floruit* is, by its very nature, not a contemporary entry.[116]

444: (AU, LL) foundation of Armagh, followed by a synchronism which takes its starting-point from the foundation of Rome. This synchronism, with its implied analogy of Armagh and Rome (as in the 'Armagh canon'),[117] is not in the nature of a genuine annalistic entry. The foundation date cannot be controlled; it has an early rival in 457.[118]

We are left with the entry under 439, which records the arrival in Ireland of the bishops Secundinus, Auxilius, and Iserninus, who came 'in aid of Patrick' (*in auxilium Patricii*); AI add to this the remark: 'but they had no claim to the apostolate, which was Patrick's only'.[119] It seems safe to assume that the specification of the role accorded to the newcomers betrays the hand of an 'editor', faced with a source that did not fit his idea of Patrick's unique position.[120] The entry in question, without the 'editorial' comment,

114. *Art. cit.*, 34, with note 77.
115. 'Patriciology', in *Seanchas Ardmhacha 1961-62*, 21.
116. See Carney, *S.I.L.H.*, 361.
117. See above, p. 18.
118. LA fol. 16v, a; the date implied is probably 457, as was understood by the Four Masters. It is noteworthy that the story, with its implied date, was inserted in the Armagh files some time in the middle of the eighth century. On the problem of the foundation date of Armagh and the connection of St Patrick with this see, cf. below, p. 91 f.
119. 'Nec tamen tenuerunt apostolatum nisi Patricius solus'.
120. To this extent Carney (*S.I.L.H.*, 361) is certainly right.

would then be earlier than the common stock of our annals. How much earlier, we cannot say; and, as has been pointed out, even for this common source various dates have been suggested. Secundinus would seem to belong to the early missionary period; perhaps the entry originally referred to him alone, and the other two names were added, possibly on the strength of the 'Synodus Prima'. The year under which the event is recorded could, to say the least, be approximately true.

There remain the several obits of Patrick and 432 as the initial year of his mission; other fifth- and sixth-century obits must be examined in the light of the former dates. The year 432 is the latest possible date for the beginning of Patrick's mission if he, like Palladius, was sent to Ireland by Pope Celestine.[121] It cannot, however, be easily reconciled with Prosper's words in *Contra Collatorem*.[122] The various dates given for the saint's death fall in two groups: 457 (Annales Cambriae; Annals of Roscrea; Chron. Scott.; 'alii' AU) and 461 (AU; Ann. Cott.) on the one hand, and 491, *recte* 492 (AU) or 492, *recte* 493 (main entry in AU; 'Tigernach'; Ann. Cott.; Chron. Scott.; Annals of Clonmacnois) on the other; the Annals of Inisfallen record Patrick's death under a year intended to be 493, but with a passion date that must be read as either 459 or 462. The dates of the second group vary merely by one year, and may be taken to represent a single basic date.[123] Those of the first group would seem to be real alternatives: 461 apparently represents the date (given in the form of a passion dating) that was known to Tírechán;[124] 457, as has been suggested,[125] though in its annalistic context clearly an alternative to 461, might, by way of an earlier annalistic source, be ultimately a misreading of some entry recording the Synod of Patrick. We do not know on

121. So Levison, *Neues Archiv* 29, 170, note 2 (1903).
122. See above, p. 6.
123. Perhaps 492 was substituted for 493 in accordance with the schematic division of Patrick's lifetime into 30+30+60 years (432+60=492).
124. Fol. 9r, b. See Bieler, 'Patriciology', in *Seanchas Ardmhacha 1961-62*, 19, note 2.
125. See above, p. 17, note 48.

what authority these dates rest. An obit c. 493 is incredible if Patrick's mission started in 432 or even a few years later. Actually, there is some evidence, late[126] and not always precise,[127] of a school of thought that dated the coming of Patrick as 456. Clearly 432-457/61 and c. 456-493 are alternative annalistic patterns. Without committing ourselves to the strict accuracy of any of these dates, we may ask which of these two periods is more probable.

The few direct inferences which can be made from Patrick's own words leave too wide a margin. In that part of Britain where he spent his first sixteen years Roman life was not yet extinct at the time. This need not necessarily point to the years before the final departure of the Roman legions; for some time local government, ecclesiastical organization, and the established ways of public and private life would continue, especially in the west and south-west, from where Patrick apparently came. His letter was written at a time when the Franks were still pagans (Ep. 14), that is, prior to the baptism of Clovis in or after 496,[127a] and, as it would

126. In a fragment of Irish annals, prefixed to the B-text of Annales Cambriae (which dates from 1286), there is, under a year corresponding to 456, the entry: 'Sanctus Patricius monente anguelo Hiberniam petiit'. Cf. Carney, *S.I.L.H.*, 343 ff.; *Problem*, 1-13. The source of this fragment was probably a sideshoot of the Irish annals as we know them; there is no way, on these grounds, of knowing whether this date rests on a 'suppressed tradition' or a later guess.
127. In the Book of Leinster (349b) a certain Baetán is said to have founded the church of Cluain Andobair in the 182nd year after the coming of Patrick. See Carney, *Problem*, 18-20. On Carney's own admission (p. 19, note 2), the date implied might be as early as 455 or as late as 458; it could even be a little later. Carney's 'indirect proof', namely that the feast of Patrick's baptism (meaning the beginning of his baptizing of the Irish) was celebrated on 5 April, and that according to Tírechán Patrick arrived in Ireland on Holy Thursday, which fell on 5 April in 456 (*Problem*, 21-30), is even less conclusive: evidence of that feast is not earlier than the end of the eighth century (for Tallaght, not for Patrician communities!), and the idea that Patrick landed on Holy Thursday is not supported by Tírechán's account. See Binchy, *art. cit.*, 103 f.; Bieler, 'Interpretationes Patricianae', in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 107, 10 f. (Jan.1967).
127a. In the plausible opinion of M. Van de Vyvor, Clovis was not concerned with conversion to Christianity before 503. See T. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The long-haired kings* (London 1962), 64, with references.

seem, before the last 'pockets' of Roman government in Gaul had disappeared, which is suggestive of a date not later than c. 485.[128] The raid of Coroticus is known only from Patrick's Letter. Its date, even in terms of approximation, is disputed, as is the identity of the raider.[129]

Several attempts have been made to extract more precise chronological indications from the Confession by linking up some of the incidents which Patrick relates with datable events of European history. Since these attempts have met with much criticism, it is necessary to review briefly the relevant passages.

In the story of his escape from Irish captivity, at the age of twenty-two, Patrick once in passing refers to dogs belonging to the company who had taken him on board their ship. Having landed on an unspecified coast at the end of three

128. That is, before Clovis defeated Syagrius at Soissons (486).

129. Coroticus is either Ceretic son of Cunedda or Ceretic *guletic* of Ail Cluaide (Strathclyde). The former is the better known of the two, and since his father expelled the Irish settlers from North Wales it would be understandable if his son made a raid on the Irish homeland. On the other hand, Coroticus was identified with the king of Strathclyde as early as Muirchú (*De conflictu sancti Patricii aduersum Coirthech regem Aloo*) and this identification might go back to Muirchú's source. It is a plausible one in view of the fact that Coroticus sold his Irish captives to the Picts and Scots (the Irish settlers in Scotland), and for the geographical consideration that a raid against the north of Ireland, the main scene of Patrick's activities, was more likely to have its base on the Clyde than in Wales. The *floruit* of Ceretic of Strathclyde, probably c. 410–440, would seem to be a little early for raiding Ireland at a time when Patrick must have been there long enough to train a native priest from boyhood. The date of Ceretic Cunedda's son is difficult to determine. According to Professor H. M. Chadwick, *Early Scotland*, Cambridge 1949, 147 ff., Cunedda invaded Wales c. 450, and must at that time have been approaching the sixties. This would permit us to date the beginning of his son's reign some time between 450 and 460. This calculation is based on the genealogy of Cunedda's great-grandson Mailcun of Gwynned; according to the Harleian genealogy of Ceretic and his descendants one would postulate for Ceretic an obit between 504 and 540. For a balanced statement of the problem see Binchy, *art. cit.*, 107-9. Count N. Tolstoy, 'Who was Coroticus', in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 97, 137-47 (March 1962) suggests that the two Ceretics were one and the same person and that the raid which occasioned St Patrick's *Epistola* took place some time between 430 and 446. For a number of proofs essential to this theory the author refers to forthcoming publications of his. Until these are available, judgment must be suspended.

days' sailing, they made their way through a *desertum* for twenty-eight days; after some time their provisions dwindled away and they were threatened with hunger; Patrick was challenged by the ship's captain to pray to his God for food, and did so; a herd of pigs came their way unexpectedly; they killed a number of them, stilled their hunger, 'and even their dogs had their fill'.[130] Olden's theory, variously developed by Bury, MacNeill, Père Grosjean, and others, including the present writer, that these dogs were Irish hounds, destined for some circus of the Roman Empire, that the ship landed at some Gallic port, and that the Irish traders were caught up in the Teutonic invasion of Gaul in 407 or in its aftermath, has been shown by Carney to be entirely unfounded as far as the dogs are concerned.[131] This very legitimate criticism, however, does not entail, as Carney would have it, that the ship did not land on the continent. Both Carney and Binchy have decided in favour of the opinion, put forward already by the late Archbishop Healy,[132] that Patrick and his company landed somewhere on the British (or Scottish) coast. There is, however, one word in Patrick's text which, in my opinion, makes this assumption, to say the least, improbable: he says they were saved from starvation by falling upon a herd of pigs (*grex porcorum*). In all Latinity *porcus*, without a qualification (*porcus silvaticus*, *silvestris*, *agrestis*), never signifies the *wild* pig.[133] The *porci* of the Confession are not wild pigs[134] but stray pigs; and such are unlikely to be met

130. 'Et canes eorum repleti sunt', Conf. 19.

131. *Problem*, 71-7. There is, however, no reason for 'correcting' the dogs out of existence: see 'Interpretationes Patricicianae', in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 107, 5-7 (Jan. 1967).

132. *Life and Writings of St Patrick*, 1905, 61 ff.

133. So Carney, *Problem*, 79. As the Director of the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* kindly informs me, no instance of unqualified *porcus* meaning 'wild pig' is there on record. This negative evidence is not invalidated by the fact that *porcus* as such specifically denotes the *piglet* (Benveniste, *Bibl. de la Soc. de Linguistique* 45, 74 ff. (1949)).

134. Note that Patrick, when in the same context referring to wild honey, correctly specifies his expression: *mel siluestre inuenerunt*. To use *porcus* for 'wild pig' is not the sort of blunder which, in Patrick's time, could have resulted from lack of education.

in herds except in a civilized country that has experienced a catastrophe as did Gaul in and after 407.[135]

The remaining passages (Conf. 26-32) form a larger context, and must be studied as a whole. Having interpreted this section in detail before,[136] I can here be brief. As is well known, Patrick refers to a 'rejection' by his 'seniors' (*seniores*) on the grounds of a sin, committed at, or perhaps before, the age of fifteen, which he had revealed to a spiritual friend (*amicissimo meo*) before being ordained a deacon, and which his friend, having told Patrick previously that he was going to (or ought to) be made a bishop, disclosed 'after thirty years' at a 'defence' (*defensio*), which took place in Britain in Patrick's absence. In the night after that 'rejection'[137] Patrick had a consoling vision, and eventually emerged from this crisis with his trust 'proved right before God and men', because the Lord 'did not prevent me from undertaking the journey on which I had decided'. A rejection by seniors (persons in ecclesiastical authority by whose decisions Patrick, in obedience, was bound to abide)[138] is unthinkable after Patrick had been raised to the episcopate, and this impression is confirmed by Patrick's plain words in which he thanks God for not having prevented the journey on which he was bent. If this is accepted, the *defensio* can only be a defence of Patrick's candidature for the Irish episcopate, and since this 'defence' took place in Britain, where Patrick, on his own express testimony, was not present at the time, it is almost inescapable to assume that he was in Gaul. Further, as the thirty years of which he speaks cannot be reckoned from the beginning of his Irish episcopate, for

135. The only alternative, Attila's invasion of Gaul, would be too late even for a 'late' Patrick.

136. *Life and Legend*, 66-70; 'Patriciology', in *Seanchas Ardmhacha 1961-62*, 25-9; 'Glimpses of St Patrick's spiritual life', in *Doctrine and Life* 11, 132 (1961).

137. That is, after Patrick had been informed of the fact – cf. Ó Raifeartaigh, 'Pádraig agus na Seniores', in *Seanchas Ardmhacha 1961-62*, 58.

138. This is the main argument against the reconstruction of Patrick's 'case' by Ó Raifeartaigh, *art. cit.*, 45-67, and its recent elaboration by him, 'The reading *Nec a me orietur* in paragraph 32 of St Patrick's Confession', in *R.S.A.I. Jn.* 95, 189-92 (1965).

which he was still a candidate,[139] they must be reckoned either from the time when he committed the sin that was held against him or from the time when he confided it to his unfaithful friend. A decision between these two possibilities is suggested by the following consideration. The inference from Patrick's words that at the time of the *defensio* he was in Gaul not only strengthens the view that his references to that province (Conf. 43, Ep. 14) are made from personal knowledge, but also concords with the first *Dictum* and with the basic Auxerre story.[140] In the circumstances, the mission of Palladius to Ireland in 431 is the only recorded event that could possibly meet the case of interpreting, in terms of known history, Patrick's account of his temporary rejection. The 'occasion' (Conf. 26) would then almost certainly have been the British mission of St Germanus in 429. If, on the other hand, Patrick's escape from Ireland fell in the year 407 or a few years later, there is no room left for thirty years between his vocation (let alone his diaconate) and the time of his rejection. The interval is even further shortened if one accepts Muirchú's statement that Patrick, intending to go to Rome, was attracted to Auxerre by the fame of St Germanus, who became bishop in about 418. On the other hand, if the thirty years are reckoned from the time of Patrick's sinning, there is no problem. Patrick would at the critical moment have been approximately forty-five years of age. Allowing for the possibility that the thirty years are a round figure, and leaving reasonable margins for Patrick's age at the time of sinning and for the presumed dates of his escape from Ireland and his arrival at Auxerre, Patrick's birthdate would be c. 385.[141]

139. I have never been able to understand why, as has often been asserted, Patrick's remark that his critics came forth *contra laboriosum episcopatum meum* (Conf. 26) could not quite naturally have been made in retrospect. In the context, this interpretation does not seem to me in the least strained. See 'Patriciology', in *Seanchas Ardmhacha 1961-62*, 26, and, to the same effect, if I understand him correctly, Ó Raifeartaigh, 'Pádraig agus na Seniores', *ibid.*, 56.

140. See above, pp. 12, 24 ff.

141. So MacNeill, *St Patrick*, 7 ('389', Bury, *op. cit.*, 334); Ryan, 'St Patrick,

That 407 (-9), which has been suggested as the date of Patrick's escape at the age of twenty-two on grounds entirely independent of the Auxerre context, fits so well a birthdate calculated on the basis of the latter gives this reconstruction considerable historical plausibility.[142]

It should be borne in mind that the basic elements of this reconstruction rest on an interpretation of Patrick's words strictly on their own terms: escape to a civilized country laid waste by hostilities; rejection prior to the Irish mission, and at a time when Patrick was absent from Britain; a sin committed when he was 'perhaps' (*nescio, Deus scit*) fifteen years old, and revealed thirty years later. If this interpretation, which would appear to be by far the most probable one, is to be related to the known historical background of the fifth century, there is, as far as I can see, no alternative to the assumption that Patrick escaped to Gaul in or not too long after 407, and that he was in Gaul again (having returned to Britain in the meantime: Conf. 23) when he was, temporarily, rejected as a candidate for the Irish episcopate. It is, to say the least, tempting to connect this rejection with the mission of Palladius in 431, known on the authority of Prosper, and with the basic data of the Auxerre source, for which a historical nucleus has been claimed on other grounds. This combination gains in probability by the fact that if Patrick was born c. 385 (407 – 22), he would have been in his forty-fifth year (c. 15+30) in 429. This does not amount to proving the accuracy of the annalistic dates 432 and 461, but it does go a long way towards placing St Patrick's Irish mission in the middle period rather than in the second half of the fifth century.

The theory of a later date of Patrick's mission is based on two observations: firstly, that almost all the Irish rulers with whom the Patrick of legend is brought into contact have their (annalistic) obits in the last decades of the fifth century, and that the obits of those whom these legends represent as

apostle of Ireland', in *Studies* 50, 121 (1961); cf. also Hanson, *St Patrick*, 16-18 ('before 390').

142. So also Ryan, *art. cit.*, 121.

Patrick's disciples fall for the greater part in the period 500-550; and secondly, that there exist certain references to the effect that Palladius was also named Patricius. If, so the argument runs, the Patricius who came to Ireland in 432 is actually the Palladius who was sent there in 431, it would be natural that his acts in course of time came to be fused with those of the Briton Patricius who came about a generation later. A dim recollection of these two Patricks is seen in some references, from the eighth century onwards, to an 'other Patrick' or Sen-Phátraic, in Irish tradition. It seems strange that the argument rests entirely on sources which, as has been said, have become gravely suspect: the seventh-century Patrick legend, the annals, and some more or less dubious references to a Palladius-Patrick, who later figures as Sen-Phátraic. On the other hand, it must be granted that the Armagh hagiographers might have been acquainted with genuine traditions as regards the founders of early churches and the local rulers and nobles who provided the land on which to build them, and that the over-all picture which emerges from the annalistic dates, however uncertain they may be individually, is confirmed by the genealogies.

In terms of probability – and this is all that we can expect – the evidence of the primary sources would seem to be to the effect that Patrick's mission extended from the 430s to the 460s; according to the seventy-century and later texts it would have to be dated a generation later. If it could be established that Palladius was also named Patricius, the case for a late Patrick, and for the assumption that the Patrick of legend has been credited also with the acts of his earlier namesake, would be considerably strengthened.[143] There are, however, strong reasons for suspecting that 'Palladius Patricius' is nothing more than a pseudo-learned theory, proposed by some Irish scholars in order to solve an apparent problem which in reality did not exist.[144] The

143. See Binchy, *art. cit.*, 130, 154.

144. For a discussion of the paragraph in the Book of Armagh (fol. 16r, a) which contains the words *Paladius . . . qui Patricius alio nomine appellabatur* see Grosjean, 'Notes d'hagiographie celtique: Paladius episcopus . . . qui

problem is fundamentally one of chronology. It can be decided only in terms of approximation, but the balance of probability, in my opinion, is definitely in favour of a mission-period falling in the second third of the fifth century. The dates 432 and 461, even though the accuracy of the latter is not demonstrable and the former is almost certainly several years too early, are considerably nearer the truth than are their alternatives.

It is, however, the historian's duty to attempt an explanation of the facts on which the theory of a late and 'composite' Patrick is based, and to assess and acknowledge the element of truth which it may contain. Eóin MacNeill has been the first to observe that Patrick's *termonn* as specified in the 'Book of the Angel' is more or less co-extensive with the territory of the Airgialla group of tribes, plus portions of the territory of the Ulaid and of Dál nAraide, and that Tírechán has little or nothing to say about Patrick's activities in that region.[145] The reason, as Dr Binchy plausibly suggests,[146] is this: that there was no need to claim what Armagh already held. If, as seems most probable, this was the centre of Patrick's missionary activities, it is easy to understand why so little of the genuine acts of Patrick is recorded in the seventh-century Armagh documents. The claims which these documents were intended to substantiate included all churches outside the *terminus Patricii* that were at least *potentially* Patrician, though many of these may have actually

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Patricius', in *Anal. Bolland.* 70, 320-26 (1952) (this paragraph 'semble avoir été conçu tout entier pour résoudre un faux problème': p. 324); Binchy, *art. cit.*, 130-133 (with references to earlier literature); Bieler, 'Interpretationes Patricianae, in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 107, 11-13 (Jan. 1967).

Space does not permit to discuss here the Sen-Phátraic question, nor do I wish to enter into a controversy (see Binchy, *art. cit.*, 115 ff.; Shaw, 'Post-mortem on the Second Patrick', in *Studies* 51, 237 ff. (1962)) involving materials which I am not competent to judge. On two essential points, however, I feel reasonably sure: that Sen-Phátraic owes his existence to 'Patricius Palladius', and that he was only subsequently identified with Saint Patrice of Nièvre.

145. 'Dates of texts in the Book of Armagh relating to St Patrick', in *R.S.A.I. Jn.* 58, 96, 100 (1928).

146. *Art. cit.*, 61.

been founded by other missionaries – Palladius, contemporaries of Patrick, and quite a number of men of the next two generations.[147] All these churches were to form the *paruchia Patricii* as distinct from his *terminus*. As critical a scholar as Dr Binchy has professed his belief that the connection of St Patrick with Armagh is historical.[148] It would be difficult indeed to account for the facts just stated in any other way, or to see how Armagh, from as early a date as c. 600 onwards, could have 'annexed' a St Patrick who was not its founder. Such big claims as those of Armagh could not have been advanced with any chance of success unless they had some foundation in fact. One of these facts must have been the general knowledge that Armagh had been Patrick's church. There must, however, have also been some basis on which Armagh could maintain that the *paruchia Patricii* covered all Ireland. The basis was much weaker, but it cannot have been a fabrication altogether. Quite probably the interests of Armagh were met halfway by a popular tendency, which seems to be universal, namely, to create one hero out of a number of agents each of whom has contributed to a great achievement in history, and no reader of the Confession and Letter of St Patrick can doubt that their author had all the personal qualities to make him that hero.[149] In this sense the Patrick of Armagh may certainly be described as a 'composite figure', but this would in large measure have been the effect of forces rooted deeply in human nature, though these were doubtless channelled into such a course as would suit the policy of Armagh. A process of this kind seems far more plausible than the artificial amalgamation of two individuals.

147. Among these there may well have been some disciples of St Patrick. The one person of whom this may be said on good authority is St Mochta of Louth (†535 AU). That, at the beginning of a letter, he styles himself *sancti Patricii discipulus* might be taken as indicating that at that time few, if any, other disciples of Patrick were still alive. See 'Interpretationes Patricianae', in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 107, 13 (Jan. 1967); Marsh, *op. cit.*, 17.

148. *Art. cit.*, 152.

149. To this extent I subscribe to the thesis of Czarnowski, *Le culte des héros et ses conditions sociales. Saint Patrice, héros national d'Irlande*, Paris 1919.

The Patrick legend in all its manifestations is a phenomenon of considerable complexity, and can be understood only if full attention is paid to its stratification. On the assumptions here made, this stratification might be pictured as follows.

Patrick, the author of the *Confessio*, came to Ireland as a bishop before the middle of the 430s and died here in his old age after about thirty years of successful missionary work.[150] He was neither the first official missionary to the Irish nor, to all appearances, was he the only one in the field. When he died, the conversion of Ireland, which he had done so much to promote, was not yet completed. His work was continued by his disciples and their successors, and also, one might expect, by the successors to other missionaries who had laboured in Ireland independently of Patrick. However, if the Auxerre document may be believed at this point, the mission of Patrick, being the successor to Palladius, had an official character which the others lacked. It would seem also that Patrick by the sheer impact of his personality and by his spiritual fervour put the other missionaries in the shade. Eventually the conversion of Ireland tended to be personified in him alone.

On this basis Patrick's own church, Armagh, later endeavoured to establish an extensive *paruchia* in order to hold its own against the powerful monastic *familiae* which had come into existence during the later sixth century.[151] Hand in hand with the ecclesiastical policy of Armagh went the political ambitions of the Uí Néill. It is probably a reflection of their common interests that Patrick was brought into

150. 'Roughly . . . 435 to 465' – Ryan, 'The Traditional View', in *Thomsa Davis Lectures: St Patrick*, 16.
151. It is hardly a mere coincidence that the obits of the alleged disciples of Patrick extend in time just to the beginning of the great monastic period. Tírechán provides even a personal link: the deacon Iustus received from St Patrick *libros baptismatis*, which he still used in his old age when baptizing Ciarán 'the son of the wright' (*Ceranum filium artificis*), the founder of Clonmacnois: LA 12 v, a.

contact with King Laegaire and, perhaps, with his successor Ailill Molt.[152]

A Patrick whose disciples lived well into the sixth century, who preached to King Laegaire and met other sons, and grandsons, of Niall Noígiallach[153] could not have died in the 460s. His life-span had to be extended for at least one generation.[154] In this way the late obits of Patrick (492 or 493) could have originated.[155]

On the other hand, if St Patrick was to be represented as *the* Apostle of Ireland, one could well understand that the promoters of the cause of Armagh were anxious to make as little as possible of Palladius. The Auxerre document, which presumably contained statements (without dates) to the effect that Patrick studied under St Germanus of Auxerre *in insula Aralanensi*, that, when an organized mission to Ireland was being contemplated, he was passed over in favour of Palladius, and that, after the latter's death, he succeeded him, was apparently 'edited' at Armagh in a

152. Patrick's prophecy to Laegaire that none of his descendants would be king was not fulfilled, but it would be true of Ailill Molt: O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 36.
153. I accept the Tara succession as proposed by Carney (*S.I.L.H.*, 324-73), viz., Nath Í (†445 AU) – Niall (†c. 452) – Laegaire (†461 AU, 463 AI), as at least an earlier annalistic pattern than the one which the Irish annals present in their actual form. While subscribing to most of Binchy's criticism (*art. cit.*, 98 ff.), I still think a case can be made for understanding Laegaire's victory over the Leinstermen (452 or 453 AU) as an event of his early reign, and, on genealogical grounds, for placing the reign of Niall after the annalistic obit of Nath Í (445 AU).
154. At this stage of the legend, Patrick's activities were still confined almost entirely to the northern and central parts of the country. The expansion of the *paruchia Patricii* further south (south Leinster and Munster) had just barely begun. It gained momentum only during the second half of the ninth century, and has found its fullest expression in the third part of the Tripartite Life. At that time it was considered an honour for any Irish church to have been founded by St Patrick, and the *Cáin Phátraic* was, on the whole, willingly accepted. See Binchy, *art. cit.*, 69.
155. The actual date might possibly have been calculated from an original obit by the addition of thirty years. The passion date found in Tírechán and in the Brussels MS of Muirchú (see my article, 'Patriciology', in *Seanchas Ardmhacha 1961-62*, 19, note 2) – which can, of course, with a minimum of palaeographical and computistical manipulation, be made to yield the annalistic obit of 461 – actually, as it stands, being taken as a Victorian A.P., implies the A.D. date 463, which, augmented by 30, would give 493.

double respect: Palladius was a failure, and Patrick was made his successor by the same Pope Celestine who had sent Palladius. Patrick's coming to Ireland could thus not be dated later than 432. This being understood, the interests of Tara would require to shift Laegaire (and some other prominent persons of his generation) from the mid-fifth century back to the end of its first third.[156]

On these premises[157] an account of St Patrick's life and work may now be attempted.[158]

ST PATRICK'S LIFE AND MISSION

Patrick – so he himself tells us[1] – was born in Britain. If his birthdate, as has been suggested, is c. 385, his early years fell in a time when Britain was still a Roman province. His father, Calpornius, was a *decurio* ('alderman')[2] and therefore must have been resident in a Roman town. It is probably there that Patrick was born. Calpornius hailed from the *uicus* – a village or, possibly, a small country-town – of *Bannauem Taburniae* (or, according to some manuscripts,

156. Cf. Kelleher, 'Early Irish history and pseudo-history', in *Studia Hibernica* 3, 126 (1963) – the date 432 was 'agreed on and generally accepted' by the alliance of Armagh and Uí Néill interests. The synchronism according to which 432 was the fourth (Annals) or fifth (Tírechán and texts dependent on him) year of Laegaire must be part of an annalistic pattern. It implies that Laegaire's reign began in either 427 or 428. It is difficult to find a reason for the choice of this date. Possibly the synchronism originally referred to a calculation according to which Laegaire's reign began in 452 or 451, and the mission of St Patrick in 456.

157. Esposito's theory ('The Patrician problem and a possible solution', in *I.H.S.* 10, 131-55 (Sept. 1956) and 'The Problem of the Two Patrick's', in *Thomas Davis Lectures: St Patrick*, 38-52) that Patrick's mission preceded that of Palladius, would solve some difficulties but creates others. Dr Binchy, who discusses it in detail, sums up by saying (p. 33): 'The balance of probability would seem to be against it'.

158. All statements that will be made henceforth should be read in the light of the problematical nature of the evidence as discussed in this chapter.

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1. Conf. 23, 43.
2. Ep. 10.

Taberniae), near which he owned a country-house (*uillula*)[3] – the place where Patrick, at the age of sixteen, fell into the hands of Irish raiders.[4] Many attempts have been made to emend the evidently corrupt place-name and thus to identify it.[5] All that we can say with confidence is that it must have been situated at or near the Irish Sea, and, in all probability, south of Hadrian's Wall.

Patrick does not mention his mother. Muirchú and, following him, the authors of the later Lives give her the name Concessa. A Q. Calpurnius Concessinus is known from an inscription of Roman Britain.[6] The concurrence of the two names is, to say the least, an interesting coincidence; however, there always remains the possibility that this inscription may have been known to Muirchú (or rather to his source) and that the name of Patrick's mother is an inference from the *cognomen* Concessinus.[7] That she was a sister of St

3. Conf. 1. The servants and maids of his father's household, who were killed by the Irish raiders when Patrick was taken captive (Ep. 10), might have formed the *familia rustica* of the *uillula*, or else might have accompanied young Patrick to that place.

4. That 'Bannauem Taburniae' was Patrick's birthplace and/or his normal place of residence is not only a gratuitous assumption but seems to me to be excluded by Patrick's own words. He says that 'Bannauem Taburniae' was a *uicus* (Conf. 1), but that his father was a *decurio* (Ep. 10). Under the Roman constitution, no *uicus* had *decuriones*; these city councils existed only in *coloniae* or *municipia*, possibly also (but as far as I can see there is no evidence to this effect) in the 'capitals' of the tribal territories (*ciuitates*). Only five places in Roman Britain had either colonial or municipal status: Colchester, Gloucester, Lincoln, Verulam, and York: R. C. Collingwood – J. N. L. Myres, *Roman Britain*, Oxford 1936, 165. Epigraphical evidence of *decuriones* exists only for Gloucester and Lincoln.

5. On a number of identifications that have been suggested, see my *Life and Legend*, 133 f. and 'St Patrick a native of Anglesey?', in *Éigse* 7, 2, 129-31 (1953). All these identifications start from the gratuitous assumption that it must be a known place. In the light of the facts stated in note 4, one might assume that Patrick's father was a *decurio* of Glevum (Gloucester), and that 'Bannauem Taburniae' was situated somewhere near the Bristol Channel. If Calpornius was a *decurio militum* (so Grosjean, 'Notes d'hagiographie celtique', in *Anal. Bolland.* 63, 72 (1945)), which, however, seems less probable (see my *Life and Legend*, 134, note 13), our choice of places would be much larger, and the great Bollandist's emendation, Clannauenta Berniciae, which has not a few points in its favour, would considerably gain in probability.

6. *CIL*, VII, 481.

7. So Grosjean, *art. cit.*, *Anal. Bolland.* 63, 72.

Martin of Tours is more than unlikely for chronological reasons;[8] this detail, first found in the Tripartite Life, probably has its origin in a desire to establish a personal link between St Patrick and the famous continential saint, whose cult was widespread in Ireland by that time, and whose Life forms the last section of the Book of Armagh.

Tírechán read in the book of his master Ultan that Patrick had four names: Magonus, Succetus, Patricius, Cothirthiacus.[9] The first three could well have formed his full 'Roman' name.[10] The fourth, in spite of its apparent etymology and Tírechán's explanation that Patrick as a slave served four households,[11] would seem to be derived from an early Irish form of Patricius, Coithrige.[12] In his own writings, the saint gives his name[13] as Patricius only – a Roman name which, though not very frequent, was by no means uncommon in later antiquity.[14] Patrick's family background is clearly the Romanized upper class of Roman Britain.

Patrick's father was also a deacon; his grandfather, Potitus, had been a priest.[15] To enter the ranks of the clergy in later life was nothing unusual for a married man in those days. Members of local government, who were corporately responsible for the payment of taxes, would often seek ordination as an escape from the financial burden of their office.[16] On the other hand, the difficult times through which the Empire was passing made it desirable, and even necessary, to take the candidates for ecclesiastical offices from the

8. See Grosjean in *The Month* new series 3, 379 f. (May 1950).
9. LA fol. 9r, b.
10. So already the scholiast on *Genair Pátraic*, verse 3. On Magonus and similar name-forms, see *Éigse* 7 2, *art. cit.*, 131 and also *CIL*, XII, 2122 (Maganus).
11. LA fol. 9r, b: 'quia seruiuit .iiii. domibus magorum'.
12. This form was known to Tírechán, who makes Patrick's itinerary end at Cashel, with the baptism of the sons of Nioth Fruich *super petram hi Coithrigi*, fol. 15v, b; he also mentions a *petra Coithrigi* in Meath, fol. 11r, a.
13. Conf. 1, 62; Ep. 1.
14. See Müller, *Der heilige Patrick*, 99, note 1.
15. Conf. 1.
16. See Bury, *Life of St Patrick*, 19 f.; Hanson, *op. cit.*, 16-18.

dwindling class of people with property, higher education, and administrative experience.[17] These things are well known from Gaul; in Britain the situation was probably worse.

To realize this double background – Celto-Roman imperial and ecclesiastic – is important for an understanding of Patrick's personality and outlook. 'Roman' and 'Christian' on the one hand, 'barbarian' (i.e., alien) and 'pagan' on the other are for Patrick practically synonymous terms.[18] The Roman Empire had become Christian, even though an influential pagan minority fought a losing battle at Rome, and the more primitive forms of Romano-Celtic paganism were still alive in Gaul and, one would expect, even more so in Britain among the non-Romanized, or little Romanized, country folk. This Roman Christian spirit (allowance being made for a certain worldliness of life) would have pervaded the atmosphere of Patrick's home. To the end of his life he regarded himself, next to being a Christian, as a citizen of the Roman Empire.[19] His Irish apostolate, which he felt to be his vocation, for which he had been longing, and even pining, was to him always an exile for the sake of Christ:[20] 'And so I live among barbarians, a stranger and exile (*proselitus et profuga*) for the love of God'; 'I am a servant in Christ to a foreign nation'.[21] Just as in the account of his escape from slavery[22] he deliberately dissociates himself from his companions and almost always (with characteristic exceptions) refers to 'them' where one might expect him to have included himself in a 'we',[23] so to the end of his days he referred to Ireland, where, as a missionary, he belonged

17. Ryan, *art. cit.*, *Studies* 50, 122 (1961).
18. See Bieler, 'Libri epistolarum Sancti Patricii Episcopi: Commentary', in *Classica et Mediaevalia* 12, 92 (1951).
19. Ep. 2.
20. Ep. 1.
21. Ep. 10.
22. Conf. 18-22.
23. Carney, *Problem*, 61 f., 77 note 1, 79. Dr Binchy's criticism of the last-mentioned note is all too justified as the latter stands, but I believe that Carney – contrary to his own translation ('were . . . restored by their (i.e., the pigs') meat') – was thinking here of the MSS reading *carnes eorum releuati sunt* 'their (the travellers') bodies were restored'.

so completely that in a moment of great emotion he could cry out 'They despise *us* because *we* are Irish',[24] normally as 'there' and not as 'here'.[25]

The hallmark of both *Romanitas* and *Christianitas* was the use of the Latin language. As has already been remarked,[26] Britain was less Romanized than any other province of the western half of the Empire. This is not to deny that a certain amount of Vulgar Latin, of much the same type as elsewhere in the Empire, was spoken fairly widely throughout the Roman province. Only on this assumption can the numerous Latin loanwords in early British be accounted for. These loanwords also prove a distinctive, and on the whole more conservative, pronunciation of Latin in Britain than in other provinces, for example, in Gaul. However, there does not seem to have been a wide use of refined conversational or literary Latin, and in the circles where Latin was cultivated as an accomplishment it had to be learned at school. Even the educated classes were probably bilingual, and would speak the native language with their servants, and possibly also in the intimate sphere of their homes. Their Latin was an acquired language, and might easily degenerate, as it actually did, into the artificial idiom of a Gildas or even of the *Hisperica Famina*.[27] The 'learned clergymen' (*dominicati rethorici*),[28] against whom Patrick inveighs and whose Latin he (clumsily enough) parodies,[29] might well have inaugurated those mannerisms which blossomed out so wildly a hundred and fifty years later. Patrick's references to his ill-spent

24. Ep. 16. The MSS read *Hiberia nati sumus*, which I emended to *Hiberionaci sumus*. For a different emendation (*Hiberione nati*) and interpretation, see T. Ó Raifeartaigh, 'Leasú Eagarthóra sa Litir faoi Choroticus', in *Studia Hibernica* 2, 174-81 (1962).
25. Müller, *Der heilige Patrick*, 85.
26. See above, p. 3.
27. Binchy, *art. cit.*, 23 f.
28. This translation, evidently the correct one, was first given by the late Prof. K. Mras of Vienna (*Anzeiger der Österr. Akademie der Wissenschaften* 1953, 109 f.), then, independently, by Prof. Mohrmann, *The Latin of St Patrick*, 29-31 (1961).
29. Conf. 9-10.

youth[30] are understood most naturally on the assumption that his first language was British, and that he was expected to learn good Latin at school. A Roman town with its own municipal government would certainly have at its disposal the services of a *grammaticus*, who would teach the boys standard Latin on the best classical models.[31]

If young Patrick, avowedly, missed many an opportunity of acquiring knowledge and a mastery of the lingua franca of his time, his religious life left even more to be desired. The crowd among whom he moved, nominal Christians though they were, did not live up to their faith: 'We turned away from God, and did not keep his commandments, and did not obey our priests, who used to remind us of our salvation'.[32] These words must, of course, be read in the light of the author's mind at the time of writing – the mind of a fervent believer and zealous apostle, who judges his past from the highest religious standard. Patrick probably was neither better nor worse than many a young boy of well-to-do parents at any time and in any society. Even the sin, committed at the age of about fifteen, which was later to be held against him, whether it was a matter of faith or of morals, was hardly of such a grievous nature as it was made to appear on the occasion of his rejection. His own words suggest a general spirit of worldliness, of indifference to the teaching of his pastors, and a way of life that was inconsistent with a living faith. It is impossible to say to what extent the picture which Patrick sketches applies to his home. He certainly does not as much as intimate that his religious indifference met with the displeasure of his parents.

30. Conf. 10: 'quatenus . . . adpeto in senectute mea quod in iuuentute non comparaui? quod obstiterunt peccata mea ut confirmarem quod ante perlegeram'.
31. Once the idea that Patrick spent his boyhood in the *uicus* referred to in Conf. 1 is abandoned (see above, note 4), the difficulty raised by Father Ryan (*art. cit.*, *Studies* 50, 122) and endorsed by Dr Binchy, *art. cit.*, 24, no longer exists. On the question of Patrick's linguistic background in general, see Bieler, 'The Place of St Patrick in Latin Language and Literature', in *Vigiliae Christianae* 6, 66 (1952); Mohrmann, *op. cit.*, 9 f.; Binchy, *art. cit.*, 22-5, with references.
32. Conf. 1.

However, conclusions *ex silentio* are always risky, and in the case of such an author as Patrick the risk is unusually great.

When the country-house of Calpornius was raided by the Irish, Patrick, then about sixteen years of age, who, apparently without his parents, happened to stay there at the time, was taken captive.[33] This raid must have been a major expedition. Patrick tells us that his fate was shared by many thousands,[34] and even though his words need not be taken literally the number of captives would appear to have been considerable.[35] Patrick saw in this misfortune a punishment for his and his fellow-victims' sins.

The captives were taken to Ireland and sold into slavery. Patrick had to tend his master's flocks[36] in the solitude of woodlands and a mountain.[37] The place of his captivity, like many other details of his life, is disputed. Both Tírechán and Muirchú locate it at Sliab Mis (Slemish) in co. Antrim, and in this have been followed by many generations of scholars. Recent scholarship, however, has taken a strong line in identifying the place of Patrick's captivity with the *silua Vocluti*, the Wood of Voclut, whence Patrick, in a dream, heard voices calling him back to Ireland,[38] and which, as must be concluded from a passage in Tírechán, was situated near Killala, co. Mayo.[39] It must be conceded that, in whatever way the details of Patrick's dream of vocation are interpreted,[40] the fact that he remembered in it that particular

33. Conf. 1. It has so far proved impossible to give this raid a place in the known history of Ireland.
34. 'Cum tot milia hominum'.
35. The raid must therefore have been aimed at a fairly densely populated coastal area. The Severn estuary would fulfil this requirement better than any other district of western Britain. If Patrick's family (*parentes*), as has been suggested (note 5 above), resided at Glevum, it would not be surprising that they had been spared (see Conf. 23).
36. Conf. 16: 'cotidie itaque pecora (i.e., sheep) pascebam'.
37. *Ibid.*: 'ut etiam in siluis et monte manebam'.
38. Conf. 23.
39. See O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 34 f., 60 f. O'Rahilly has been followed by Carney, *Problem* (see index s.v. Silva Focluti, Slemish), and Binchy, *art. cit.*, 76.
40. In all essentials I maintain my interpretation of this paragraph ('The problem of "Silua Focluti" ', *I.H.S.* 3, 351-64, esp. 363 f. (Sept. 1943); *Life and Legend*, 58 f.; 'Glimpses of St Patrick's spiritual life', *Doctrine and Life* 11, 129 f. (1961)) against Mohrmann (*The Latin of St Patrick*, 19 f.); as regards the crucial words *ipsorum qui*, see my remarks in *Éigse* 10, 152, footnote (1962).

district – the one Irish place-name that is mentioned in his writings – is a strong argument for seeing in it the place where, or in the vicinity of which, he had spent his years of captivity; so already did Tírechán, who makes Patrick go there immediately after his first Easter in Ireland.[41] On the other hand, Slemish would well bear out Patrick's reference to a mountain, whereas the Killala region is anything but mountainous, and can hardly be described even as hilly.[42]

The physical and mental suffering that Patrick endured is easy to imagine. Soon, however, he saw God's way with him in a different light than merely as a well-deserved punishment. God 'opened his eyes'[43] to the reality of the faith which so far he had professed without much thought; the love and fear of God came to him and his spirit was moved. He prayed long and often, under the open sky, even when exposed to inclement winter weather, 'and I felt no harm . . . because the Spirit within me was fervent'.[44]

Six years Patrick had spent as a herdsman in Ireland when he heard a voice in his sleep approving of his penance and promising him that he would soon return home. Shortly afterwards, he heard the voice again, telling him that his ship was ready. He left his Irish master and, under God's guidance, made his escape over two hundred miles of unknown country to a port where a ship was ready to sail.[45] The port from which Patrick sailed is unknown. Either starting-point, Voclut or Slemish, allows for a number of possibilities; most scholars have suggested some place on

41. LA fol. 10v, a ff.
42. Professor T. Jones Hughes points out to me that in spoken Gaelic and in place-names 'mountain' often stands not for height but for moorland, but moorland, I understand, is unsuitable for grazing. Marsh, *op. cit.*, 10, defends the Slemish tradition as generally more probable.
43. Conf. 2.
44. Conf. 16.
45. Conf. 17.

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the east coast, from the estuary of the Boyne down to Wicklow or Wexford.

The story of Patrick's escape[46] is so well known that it will be sufficient to tell it in mere outline. Patrick asked the captain of the ship (*gubernator*) to take him on board, and assured him that he would not become a burden.[47] He was refused admission, and, praying, went on his way back to a place where he had found shelter; but in the meantime the captain, perhaps on the insistence of the crew, had changed his mind. One of his men called Patrick back, and invited him to enter into a bond of protection with them (*sugere mammellas eorum*).[48] Although Patrick would not perform this pagan ceremony, he was admitted, and went with them on the understanding that he was a Christian.[49] After three days they landed on an unspecified coast, which, for reasons stated above,[50] would seem to have been Gaul. For twenty-eight days they made their way through deserted country, and after some time found themselves short of food. Patrick was challenged to pray to his God to save them from the threat of starving to death. He did so, and they came across a herd of stray pigs. They slaughtered many of them, fed themselves and their dogs, and rested for two nights. They also found wild honey, some of which they offered Patrick (in sacrifice, possibly, interpreting the fulfilment of his

46. Conf. 18-22.

47. Conf. 18: 'locutus sum ut haberem unde nauigare cum illis', is plausibly explained by Carney (*Problem*, 57) as meaning that he had sufficient provisions to maintain himself during the crossing.

48. On the meaning of this expression see Ryan, 'A difficult phrase in the "Confession" of St Patrick', in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 52, 293-9 (Sept. 1938); O'Brien, 'Miscellanea Hibernica', in *Études Celt.* 3, 372 (1938); Bieler, *Libri Epistolarum* 2, 139 f. (1952).

49. I am considering the emendation of Conf. 18 (ed. White, 240, ll. 15-17) as follows: *sed uerumtamen ab illis<separaui me; magis>speraui uenire in fide* (*fidem* D) *Iesu Christi, quia gentes erant, et hoc* (*ob hoc* D) *obtinui cum illis* 'on the contrary, I kept away from them; I hoped, however, to join them in the faith of Jesus Christ, for they were pagans, and this I obtained from them'. See Bieler, 'Libri Epistolarum Sancti Patricii Episcopi: Addenda', in *Anal. Hib.* 23, 314 (1964). In a philologically less satisfactory form, the idea was first put forward by Carney (*Problem*, 61).

50. P. 37 f. See also Marsh, *op. cit.*, 13.

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prayer as a manifestation of divine power vested in his person), but he would not touch it. All the same, he was greatly honoured by his companions from that day onwards.[51] For the rest of their journey, which continued for another ten days, they were fortunate in having dry weather, and their newly-found provisions lasted them until they reached an inhabited area.

This is not the place to dwell on all the problems of interpretation which this account poses. Some of them have been discussed earlier, others are immaterial to the present purpose. Patrick tells his story as part, if one may say so, of a spiritual argument: his escape was as providential as had been his captivity; his concern for the pagans who were the instrument of his escape was inspired by the same religious motive as was his dissociation from their persons and their ways; the Spirit, whose dwelling in him he had not yet realized during the years which he spent as a slave in Ireland (although he was to do so later),[52] continued to inhabit him,[53] and his 'voice' (*responsum*) did not fail him. It is as a part of this argument that Patrick relates a strange experience which he had during the journey through the 'desert',[54] and another one, which hardly belongs to this phase of his life.[55] The former had a particular importance for Patrick, because it was on this occasion that he first became aware of something in him that was not of his own human nature. In the night after they had their fill of pork Patrick had a nightmare which he interpreted as an attack of Satan, who 'fell over him like a huge rock' and paralysed his limbs. Suddenly, he did not know how, he was prompted to invoke Helias, and

51. Carney's different interpretation of this episode (*Problem*, 77-9), in my opinion, lacks plausibility.

52. Cf. 'sicut modo uideo', Conf. 16.

53. Cf. 'propter inhabitantem spiritum eius', Conf. 33.

54. Conf. 20.

55. Conf. 21. I still think my own explanation (*Life and Legend*, 62 f.) is less strained than Carney's (*Problem*, 69-71), on philological grounds, if on no others. In particular, his punctuation 'Ea prima nocte – itaque mansi cum illis – audiui responsum', etc., on which his interpretation largely depends, is contradicted by Patrick's usage: he never uses *itaque* (nine instances) in the first place of a phrase or sentence.

as he cried out 'Helias, Helias!' the sun rose and dispelled his misery. The elements which a rational analysis of this experience can detect are obvious: the Helias – Helios (Sun) theme, the idea of Christ as *Sol Salutis;*[56] but of such reminiscences and associations, at best half-conscious, Patrick was not aware. What mattered to him was that, then as later, the Spirit cried out on his behalf (that is, in his place),[57] as Christ had foretold to his disciples (Matt. 10:20).

These manifestations of the Spirit revealed their nature to Patrick ever more clearly as he began, slowly and gradually, to realize his vocation to the Irish apostolate. Home again with his people after years of absence – he does not tell us how he managed to rejoin them – he was welcomed and urgently requested to stay. By that time, however, the idea had probably taken root in his mind that the way God had led him might have a wider and more definite significance than that of his personal sanctification – that he was to bring to the Irish the faith which he too had begun to realize in its fullness when living as a slave in their country. It would still be far from a certainty of his conscious mind, yet strong enough to take shape in a dream.[58] He saw a man named Victoricus, coming, as it were, from Ireland with innumerable letters, and he gave him one of these to read. The opening words of that letter were: 'The Voice of the Irish'. Hardly had Patrick begun to read when he thought he heard their actual voices – the voices of those beside the Wood of Voclut, near the western sea – 'and they cried out as with one mouth: "We ask thee, boy,[59] come and once more walk among us".' Patrick was deeply moved. He was not able to read further, and at this point he woke up. In spite of the biblical phrase by which this experience is introduced ('I saw in a vision of the night'), it is a typical

56. See Bieler, *The Works of St Patrick*, 84.
57. So, convincingly, Carney, *Problem*, 80.
58. Conf. 23. For this and the following paragraphs cf. my article 'Glimpses of St Patrick's spiritual life', in *Doctrine and Life* 11, 126-32 (1961).
59. The MSS read *sancte puer*, but *sancte* is probably a later insertion.

dream. Here we find the characteristic individualization of a subconscious state which a dreamer is likely to experience: Patrick's call to the Irish mission, of which he was as yet but dimly aware, takes the form of a message delivered by an individual letter-bearer, and the Irish who call him back are those of a particular district. About the latter enough has been said above. Regarding Victoricus, we have to acknowledge our complete ignorance as to his identity.[60] He must have been someone known to Patrick personally – in my opinion, British rather than Irish.[61]

Patrick apparently did not jump to the conclusion that this dream was a divine call. By the very fact that in the Confession this dream is followed by an account of two experiences of a distinctly spiritual, in fact of a mystical nature, it is suggested that with regard to the dream Patrick adopted a prudently cautious attitude. He would pray to be enlightened, and it is in prayer that he found the certainty for which he had been waiting, the assurance that if he was to return to Ireland he was going to do the express will of God. On two occasions he realized that it was not he who prayed, but Christ, or the Spirit, within him.[62] He now understood the nature of the voices that had guided him on his escape, he understood who it was that had cried out in his stead when he heard himself, to his amazement, invoking Helias. He also knew that the 'Voice of the Irish' which he had heard in his dream had conveyed to him a divine vocation. He no longer had any doubts. God had chosen him to preach his word to those whom he once had served as a slave, and he, unworthy of such a great grace as he knew he was,[63] could but humbly follow the path that lay before him. The assurance that he was chosen by God for

60. Suggested identifications range from an unknown Irishman whom Patrick had known as a slave – Victoricus 'may be a translation of Irish Búadach or Cobthach': O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 30 – to St Victricius of Rouen.
61. I can see no reason why *Victoricus* should not be an ordinary Celto-Roman name, a 'celtizised' *Victor*.
62. Conf. 24-25.
63. Cf. Conf. 12.

this task never forsook him; and in that dark hour when everything seemed to turn against him the voice (*responsum*) confirmed his vocation, which had been called in question.[64] As events turned out, his trust in God was proved right. In retrospect, the author of the Confession saw in this 'vision of the night' the last link in a chain of spiritual events which had begun in the solitude of an Irish countryside.[65]

It is for this reason – to bring to his readers' minds the coherence, continuity, and consistency of his mystical experiences in proof of his divine vocation to the Irish apostolate – that Patrick does not bother to tell us where, under whom, and how long he prepared himself for this task. In the preceding section, reasons have been given for believing that Muirchú's account of Patrick's years of study and some details which Tírechán had learnt from Ultan or had found in Ultan's book are ultimately derived from a document of the church of Auxerre; that this document concerned the author of the Confession, and that its main portion covered the same period as do chapters 26 to 33 of Patrick's apologia; and that to the extent that the Auxerre document is faithfully represented in the Patrician documents of the seventh century, the latter may be considered genuine historical sources. Unfortunately, their value is considerably diminished, and their utilization rendered precarious, by the apparent changes that were made in the original account at Armagh with a view to minimizing the missionary activities of Palladius in every possible respect – time, extent, and impact – for the aggrandizement (as it was then understood) of St Patrick. A reconstruction of the actual happenings can only be tentative. It has to proceed along two lines: an interpretation on strictly textual and linguistic grounds of Patrick's account of the crisis through which he had gone, and an elimination of all those elements of the Auxerre story which might possibly have been inspired

64. Conf. 29.
65. The unity of the entire section has been emphasized by me, *art. cit.*, *Doctrine and Life* 11, 131, and even more strongly by Ó Raifeartaigh, 'Pádraig agus na Seniores', in *Seanchas Ardmhacha 1961-62*, 46 ff.

by Armagh interests. The remainder of that story may be used for filling the gaps of Patrick's account (who, as has been pointed out, dwells exclusively on events of a spiritual significance); finally, one might attempt to place the entire episode in the known history of the fifth century.[66]

What does Patrick tell us? He was attacked by a number of his seniors (*seniores*) in a most humiliating way, when they 'brought up his sins' against his 'laborious episcopate'. These sins, first mentioned vaguely in the plural – Patrick, here as elsewhere, humbly professes himself to be a sinner, and utterly unworthy of the office for which he was chosen by God – are later more precisely defined as one particular sin, which Patrick had committed when he was about fifteen years old ('what I had done in my boyhood one day, nay, in one hour, because I was not yet strong'),[67] and which, thirty years later, was revealed by an intimate friend, to whom he had confided it in a scrupulous moment before he was ordained a deacon. This friend, about whose betrayal of his secret Patrick speaks so movingly, must have been a senior ecclesiastic of some influence. He had told Patrick that he was going to be consecrated a bishop (or, possibly, that he should be consecrated a bishop) – undoubtedly, as is proved by the context, for the Irish mission – at a time when his own ambitions would never have risen so high. He was even prepared (so Patrick was told by some fellow-clerics) to support his candidacy in his absence when he was to be 'screened' ('ante defensionem illam, quod ego non interfui'). However, a number of Patrick's ecclesiastical superiors did not have a high opinion of his qualifications for the post of leader of the Irish mission. To these persons Patrick, pious

66. The interpretations on which the following account is based will be found partly in *Seanchas Ardmhacha 1961-62*, 27-31, and *Doctrine and Life* 11, 132, partly above, pp. 38-40.
67. The nature of Patrick's sin has been a matter of much speculation. His words might easily be taken as hinting at some sexual act, which, even if it was committed only once in puberty, would be a serious matter in a quasi-monastic milieu, where the ideal of absolute virginity was so greatly exalted. On the other hand, it might have been a passing assent to heresy, perhaps an hour's reading of some heretical book. Does the long creed-like section of the Confession (c. 4) indicate that Patrick's orthodoxy was suspected?

and well-disposed though he was, seemed to fall spectacularly short of the standards of both theological and canonistic learning and general education which one might reasonably expect of a bishop. They even implied that he would never make good in any capacity once he left the sheltered existence within his community and ventured among the 'enemies who had no knowledge of God'.[68] In their eyes, Patrick's eagerness to be sent to Ireland as a missionary seemed to be the ambition of a man who was blind to his limitations. And now Patrick's trusted friend, contrary to his original intention, changed sides and revealed the sin which Patrick once had confided to him. It was this disclosure that definitely turned the scales against Patrick. He was now deemed not only incompetent but also morally unworthy. He was rejected. When the decision of his seniors was announced to him, it came as a terrible blow (*conculcatio*). 'On that day', he says, 'I was struck so that I might have fallen now and for eternity'. Did Patrick, for a moment, contemplate going to Ireland without permission – not as a bishop, but simply as a self-appointed preacher of the Gospel? His words certainly cannot refer to the mere fact of his rejection; they must have something to do with the way in which he reacted.[69]

However, if any such thought crossed Patrick's mind, it was not for long. In the night following the announcement of his rejection, he had a consoling vision. He saw 'a writing without honour against his face' and at the same time heard a voice saying 'We have seen with displeasure the face of him who has been referred to by his bare name' (*designati nudato nomine*). Here, as Patrick emphasizes, the divine voice identifies itself with the beholder. It was God's will that Patrick should be appointed bishop to the Irish, and so it came to pass. In his charity, Patrick allows that his critics and seniors acted in good faith, and asks God that the affliction they brought on him may not be reckoned to them

68. Conf. 46.
69. This might be the meaning of Conf. 34: *gratiam ago Deo meo qui me fidelem seruauit in die temptationis meae.*

as sin. Even of his unfaithful friend he speaks with sadness rather than bitterness. He might even have kept silent about the incident, had it not been for the divine disapproval of his friend's action implied in that vision, which, for the glory of God, he felt bound to make known.[70]

Let us now turn to the Auxerre story. At the age of thirty, Patrick decides to go to Rome in order to study there for the priesthood. On his way through Gaul, however, he hears of the fame of Bishop Germanus of Auxerre, and becomes his disciple. He studies and practises the religious life there (in the *insola Aralanensis*, wrongly understood by Ultan to be an island in the Tyrrhene Sea) for thirty or forty years.[71] At the end of this period, his old friend Victoricus appears to him in visions, and in one of these he hears the call of the 'sons and daughters of the Wood of Foclut' (clearly a misreading of Conf. 23). He starts on his journey to the work for which he has prepared himself, the preaching of the Gospel, in the company of a senior, the priest Segitius, whom Germanus had given him as witness and companion, because he (Patrick) had not yet been consecrated a bishop. The reason why Patrick was not consecrated (as would seem to have been planned) was that Pope Celestine had consecrated Palladius and sent him as bishop to Ireland. However, Palladius met with hostility and had little or no success. He decided to return to Rome, but on his way back he died in Britain. On hearing the news of Palladius's death from his disciples Augustinus, Benedictus, and others at 'Eboria', Patrick and his companions betake themselves to a Bishop Amat(h)orex, who resides in the vicinity, and from the hands of this bishop Patrick receives episcopal consecration, while Auxilius, Iserninus and others receive minor orders. Patrick then continues his journey without delay.[72]

70. Cf. Conf. 33.
71. The figures are impossible. Thirty years would correspond to the duration of the episcopate of St Germanus.
72. The main texts from which the Auxerre story must be reconstructed are Muirchú I, 5-9 and the parallel sections, partly independent of Muirchú, in Vita II and Vita IV, and the early portion of Tírechán's work which depends on Ultan. To these may be added, reservedly, the first *Dictum.*

I repeat briefly the interpretation of these details given earlier. As soon as Patrick was sure of his vocation[73] he went to the continent, possibly with Rome as his destination, to prepare himself for holy orders. He decided to become a pupil of the famous bishop Germanus of Auxerre, and joined the community on the island in the Yonne where Germanus had founded a monastery opposite his cathedral. He was probably conspicuous among his brethren for his devotion and holiness of life, but also for his lack of education and his limited intellectual talents. He may have made a *peregrinatio religiosa* at one time to famous shrines in Gaul – to Tours possibly – and to Italy, and on that occasion have visited monastic settlements on some of the Tyrrhene Islands, possibly also Lérins – although the first *Dictum* is silent about the latter, and Ultan's 'evidence' to that effect involves at least one geographical error (Lérins is not situated in the Tyrrhene Sea) and in all probability also a misunderstanding of his source which mentioned an island in the river Yonne. In due course, Patrick was raised to the diaconate, not without having previously confided to a trusted friend among his brethren some scruples concerning a sin of his boyhood. All that time his ultimate goal stood before his eyes: one day to be allowed to go to Ireland as a missionary as he was bidden by God to do. He must have discussed this cherished plan of his with senior members of the community, and in particular with his ecclesiastical superiors (his *seniores* in the technical meaning of the term). Their reactions were divided: some (including the friend in whom he had confided) were favourable, while others, on

73. There is some chronological difficulty. According to the chronology which I follow, Patrick escaped from Ireland c. 407, when he was approximately twenty-two years old. He would certainly have returned home before 410 at the very latest. The episcopate of Germanus extended from 418 to c. 448, and if Patrick was attracted by the fame of the bishop of Auxerre, the latter must already have held the see for some time when Patrick went there. This leaves rather a long time for Patrick to become convinced of his vocation. Of course, Patrick is singularly imprecise where longer lapses of time are concerned, and he himself bridges the gap between the last mystical experience which gave him the certitude of his vocation and the crisis described in chapters 26-33 with a simple *et quando*.

all too plausible grounds, disapproved. Patrick's personal aptitude apart, the whole project must have seemed rather remote. It was not until the new outbreak of Pelagianism in Britain in 429 that Ireland would begin to loom in the minds of the Auxerre clergy. However, when their bishop, Germanus, along with Bishop Lupus of Troyes, was on the suggestion of Palladius sent to Britain as papal legate in order to fight the heretics, the ecclesiastical situation of the neighbouring island could no longer be ignored. There were Christians in Ireland, sufficient in number to require the services of a bishop. His first duty would obviously be to organize a diocese and to teach the orthodox Catholic doctrine which might be endangered by contacts with British Pelagians. Another consideration, though less imminent, would be the preaching of the Christian faith in those large parts of Ireland which were still pagan. Patrick, who knew the country, and whose desire to return there as a missionary was no secret, might well have been proposed by some of the *seniores* as a candidate. However, the opposition to his candidacy gained the upper hand, and when, at a meeting held in Britain (in 429 or perhaps later), Patrick's friend disclosed the secret of his sin, Patrick was rejected. Palladius, who had been responsible for the appointment of Germanus as papal legate in 429, was chosen by the Pope, Celestine, to be Ireland's first bishop, and was sent there in 431. It was the death of Palladius some years later (hardly before 434) that gave Patrick his long-awaited chance. He was, it would seem, on his way to the Channel, apparently in order to join the mission of Palladius as a simple priest, or even as a deacon,[74] in the company of a senior priest, Segitius, who was to present him to Palladius, when, at a place which has plausibly (if not cogently) been identified with the first relay from Auxerre on the route northwards, the company of

74. There is no evidence to show that Patrick was ordained a priest before he became a bishop. He might well have been raised to the episcopate from the diaconate, as apparently was the case of Palladius. In that event Segitius would have had authority over Patrick, by virtue not only of seniority but also of rank.

clerics met some of the companions of Palladius, who were bringing the news of his death to Auxerre. On the tomb of St Amator, the predecessor of Germanus, Patrick was consecrated a bishop. With a minimum of delay, made necessary by the changed circumstances, he made for his destination.[75]

The basis of this reconstruction has to meet a number of objections. Some of these, which are of a more or less technical nature, have already been dealt with.[76] Others, made on more general grounds, will have to be faced now. They turn on the regional character of Patrick's Latinity and Bible text, and on his education and range of reading.

If Patrick received his clerical training in Gaul, one would expect him to write, more or less, the Latin of the circles where he moved during his years of study. However, it seems difficult to point out in his Latinity any distinct Gallicisms.[77] On the other hand, the general impression which one gets from his Latin is that it is continental. The greater conservatism of British Latin which Jackson[78] has found in its phonology[79] is paralleled, as far as I can see, in the fields of morphology and syntax. The inscriptions, pagan and Christian, of Roman and sub-Roman Britain[80] contain rather few vulgarisms, apart from phonetic ones

75. It may be assumed that the new bishop's retinue did not include Segitius, whose testimony was no longer required, and whose presence could, in the changed circumstances, only cause embarrassment to himself as well as to Patrick. This would explain the absence of the name of Segitius from the lists of Patrick's clergy in Ireland, and the complete silence concerning him in any account of Patrick's mission. (On this difficulty, see O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 54, note 18. His criticism of the view that Segitius was to accompany Patrick to Ireland, and his assertion that this is a relic of the Auxerre-Rome journey, are both unfounded.)

76. See above, pp. 24 ff.

77. See Binchy, *art. cit.*, 24-6. A possible Gallicism is *gerulus litterarum* (Ep. 21), see my remarks in *Éigse* 10, 152 f. (1962).

78. *Language and History in Early Britain*, Edinburgh 1953, 80 ff.

79. It is mainly facts of phonetics that can be deduced from the study of Latin loanwords in British.

80. See E. Huebner, *Inscriptiones Britanniae Latinae* (*CIL*, VII, 1873) and *Inscriptiones Britanniae Christianae*, 1876, which both have linguistic indexes; and the collection of post-Roman inscriptions of Britain in Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils*, I, 162-9 and Nash-Williams, *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales* (1950).

(and these, as has been remarked, are less advanced than those of other provinces), and this vulgar Latin element is, as a whole, insignificant in comparison with the 'pre-Romance' character of Patrick's Latin. Linguistic evidence does not go very far in supporting the theory that Patrick's Latin is British.[81]

Much the same is true of Patrick's biblical text. It is distinctly Gallican, but we know too little of the biblical text of Britain to deny categorically that similar biblical texts were current there. The only fifth-century British author whose Bible text is at all comparable is the Pelagian Fastidius. In the few verses which they have in common, three identical variants are so widespread that they prove nothing, and with regard to a fourth (Ps. 5:7 *eos* Patrick, *omnes* Fastidius) they part company.[82] Gildas, who writes about the middle of the sixth century, but whose biblical text would seem to be rather conservative, differs from Patrick four times out of a total of five; the one time where they agree they both follow the Vulgate. A broader basis of comparison is provided by the commentary of Pelagius on the Epistles of St Paul. Pelagius and Patrick concur in quoting or paraphrasing twenty-one verses of the Bible. In fifteen instances Patrick's text differs from the genuine (A-)text of Pelagius; twice they have an identical text – that of the Vulgate; the remaining four instances – all paraphrases – allow of no certain diagnosis. Besides, Pelagius, who had come to Rome in 384 and wrote his commentary on St Paul there in 406, used a Vulgate text tinged with Old Latin readings of an Italian type, and is not representative for the British Bible text at all.[83] The latter remains, for all practical purposes, an unknown entity. If, as I have suggested, Patrick once echoes St Jerome's *Nouum opus* – the preface to his revision of the

81. On Patrick's Latinity see my article 'The Place of St Patrick in Latin Language and Literature', in *Vigiliae Christianae* 6, 65-98 (1952); Mohrmann, *The Latin of St Patrick*, Dublin 1961, and my review of this publication in *Éigse* 10, 149-54 (1962).

82. See my remarks in 'Der Bibeltext des heiligen Patrick' in *Biblica* 28, 258 (1947).

83. See Frede, *Pelagius, der irische Paulustext, Sedulius Scottus*, Freiburg 1961.

Gospel text – this would be a further argument in favour of Gaul.[84] There is no evidence of the Vulgate in Britain during the first half of the fifth century. It may be mentioned here in passing that Patrick's 'creed' also is Gallican in character,[85] but again we have no means of differentiation between Gaul and Britain in the matter of *symbola*, and here, for once, there is reason for believing that no essential differences existed.

Finally, it has been said that Patrick, the unlearned man (*rusticus*), is most unlikely to have been a product, however mediocre, of such a centre of ecclesiastical learning as was Auxerre in the time of St Germanus.[86] Some qualification, however, is called for in the interpretation of Patrick's 'rusticity'. Admittedly, his insistence on the fact of his lack of higher learning, even if it were to some extent a conventional expression of modesty, is at once too genuine and too justified to be pushed aside lightly. However, he was a *homo unius libri* only in the sense that no book other than the Bible has left its imprint on his mind and his way of expression. He must have read other books as well wherever he was trained, and a number of linguistic details in his writings are, to say the least, suggestive of such reading.[87] He never had the makings of a man of letters, nor had he the least desire to be one. At the same time he was aware of certain demands of literary style, and he complied with them

84. I am referring to the metaphorical use of *saliua*, 'savour (of style)' in Conf. 9 – see my contribution, 'The Lives of St Patrick and the Book of Armagh', in *Thomas Davis Lectures: St Patrick*, 65.
85. Cf. Bieler, 'The "Creeds" of St Victorinus and St Patrick', in *Theological Studies* 9, 121-4 (1948).
86. See Binchy, *art. cit.*, 88 f.
87. See Bieler, *art. cit.*, in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 6, 68-70. Professor J. J. O'Meara's most valuable study of the alleged parallels in the Confessions of St Augustine and the Confession of St Patrick, which has deservedly won the approval of such scholars as Signor Esposito, Professor Mohrmann, and Dr Binchy, still leaves a number of similarities of expression which *might* (even though they need not) be explained as reminiscences. Some more resemblances have recently been listed by Courcelle, *Les Confessions de Saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire*, Paris 1963, 211-213, of which at least one (Augustine, Conf. X. 3, 4, 16 – Patrick, Conf. 6) seems to me telling. See also *Éigse* 10, 150.

as best he could,[88] even if the result is not much to his credit. His *seniores* were well aware of this shortcoming, perhaps too much so. His performance must have fallen considerably below the average standard of the clergy of Gaul, or for that matter of Britain, where the *dominicati rethorici* looked down on him. Does this exclude Auxerre as the place of his training? I do not think so. Even in such an ecclesiastical centre as Auxerre there is room for the occasional cleric of little book-learning but of great practical intelligence, singleness of purpose, and sanctity of life, who will achieve what is denied to others. A St Germanus might have seen deeper than many a British canonist. St Patrick at Auxerre cannot have been a greater anomaly than was the Curé of Ars among the French clergy of his time, only the field of action that awaited Patrick was greater.

All that we know for certain about St Patrick's mission is what he himself tells us.[88a] Again, as has been the case with regard to his earlier life, Patrick's statements form part of an argument: he wishes to assure his critics as well as his own converts that the way he conducted his mission was just as much a manifestation of God's grace, and was, in every respect, as directly guided by God's will, as had been his vocation to the Irish apostolate. His account is inevitably selective, unsystematic, and, for the greater part, couched in general terms. Even where, occasionally, he refers to a particular event, no names are mentioned. Tírechán fills in the details – on what authority we often do not know. He certainly had the Confession before him; once he quotes the saint's words – wrongly, no doubt[89]– as referring to an incident which he relates. In its general aspects, however,

88. Cf. in particular Conf. 9-10, with my commentary; *art. cit.*, in *Vigiliae Christianae* 6, 96-8; H. M. Chadwick (and others), *Studies in Early British History*, Cambridge 1959, 217-19.
88a. Cf. D. T. Keegan, "The Writings of St Patrick in the Light of the Present-Day Theology of Missionary Preaching" in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 106, 204-26 (Oct. 1966).
89. Patrick says, Conf. 53, that he paid as much as the price of fifteen men to the brehons ('illis qui iudicabant', see below, note 104); Tírechán makes this the price of a pact (*foedus*) which Patrick concluded with the sons of Amolngid for safe conduct, LA 10v, b.

the picture emerging from Tírechán's 'acts' of St Patrick is, on the whole, plausible, both in relation to Patrick's own account and in terms of historical probability, judged by our knowledge, scanty and uncertain as it often is, of the political and social scene in fifth-century Ireland.

Patrick likes to describe himself, in biblical terms, as a fisher and hunter of men.[90] He considers himself a latecomer to this vocation, one whose mission has been to those in the remotest corner of the world as then known, 'in the last days before the end of the world',[91] as has been foretold in the Gospel: 'we are witnesses that the Gospel has been preached unto those parts beyond which there lives nobody'.[92] The number of his converts was great: he speaks of 'many people',[93] of a 'copious multitude and crowd',[94] of 'so many thousands',[95] of 'countless numbers'.[96] This is a bold claim; but as it is made by so humble a man as was Patrick we have to believe him. He repeatedly refers to his administering baptism[97] and confirmation[98] as well as to the ordination of clergy;[99] his silence about other sacraments is understandable from the nature of his argument. On almost every occasion Patrick emphasizes the great number of those whom he had baptized, confirmed, or ordained. Tírechán occasionally describes mass conversions and the baptism of thousands of people on one day. Again, this may be a misunderstanding of Patrick's words – although, on a limited scale, such events are in themselves quite probable.

Patrick's work was not an easy one. Apart from the obvious difficulties of travelling in a country with little or

90. Conf. 40; Ep. 11.
91. Conf. 34, 40.
92. Conf. 34; cf. Conf. 51; Ep. 6, 9.
93. Conf. 38.
94. Conf. 40; cf. Luke 6:17.
95. Conf. 14. 50.
96. 'Enumerare nequeo' – Ep. 12, 16.
97. Conf. 14, 40, 42, 50 f.; Ep., *passim*. A baptismal ceremony is referred to in Ep. 3.
98. 'Consummare' – Conf. 38, 51; 'confirmare' – Ep. 2. Cf. Marsh, 'St Patrick's terminology for Confirmation', in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 93, 145-54 (March 1960).
99. Conf. 38, 50, 51.

no organized traffic, he had to overcome the natural distrust of strangers in a closely-knit tribal society and the prejudice against a new faith on the part of those who had a vested interest in the existing order of things. He speaks, in language borrowed from St Paul, of the 'twelve perils in which his life was at stake',[100] he mentions the danger, experienced on many occasions, of being made a slave, and onslaughts on his person 'too numerous for words';[101] with such dangers, and even with the possibility of murder, he had to reckon day after day,[102] but, trusting in God, he knew no fear. He would, of course, take the necessary precautions; in particular, he would ensure for himself and his retinue safe conduct through the territories where he was going to preach. In a country divided into a great number of tribal kingdoms, as was the Ireland of Patrick's time, this meant frequent approaches to the petty kings and to their legal advisers, the brehons. Patrick had learnt – whether this knowledge was acquired already during his Irish captivity or, more likely, in the course of his missionary experience he does not tell us – that the goodwill and assistance of those who wielded power and had influence could be secured for a consideration, and he acted on this knowledge. He bought the permission of kings[103] and brehons[104] to preach throughout their territories, and paid princes handsomely for escorting him on his missionary journeys.[105] In view of the frequent feuds of tribal kingdoms with one another, Patrick had to be particularly careful. Sincerely as he longed for the crown of martyrdom,[106] he was not the fool to risk his life unnecessarily and before 'his time had come'.[107] Even with the greatest care, danger could not always be avoided. On

100. Conf. 35; cf. 51.
101. *Ibid.*; cf. also Conf. 37, Ep. 6.
102. Conf. 58.
103. Conf. 51 f.
104. Conf. 53. MacNeill, *Early Irish Laws and Institutions*, Dublin 1934, 99, understood the words 'illis qui iudicabant per omnes regiones' of the kings, but see Binchy, *art. cit.*, 8, note 3.
105. Conf. 52.
106. Cf. Conf. 37 *ad fin.*, 53, 57 *ad fin.*, 59.
107. Conf. 52.

one occasion Patrick, with his company and his guides, was seized – apparently in territory hostile to those who were protecting him – by armed force, was put in fetters, and he and his companions were robbed of all their belongings. He had every reason to fear for his life. Fortunately, 'friends, whom he had seen before' came to his rescue in time; a fortnight later, Patrick was freed, and all their property was restored. This probably means that the missionary had made his usual approaches in the *tuath* where he was going to preach, that those who attacked his party were ignorant of the fact, and that the intervention of his friends was needed to put things right.

It is all the more remarkable that in these circumstances Patrick constantly and, in the opinion of certain persons, stubbornly, refused to accept offerings from his converts. Not only was he careful to avoid even the slightest appearance of simony: 'When I baptized so many thousands of people, did I perhaps expect from any of them as much as half a screpall? . . . Or when the Lord ordained clerics everywhere through my unworthy person and I conferred the ministry upon them free, if I asked any of them as much as the price of my shoes, speak against me and I will return it to you'.[108] He was adamant in returning even spontaneous gifts made by the faithful on no particular occasion: 'I have tried somehow to keep myself safe, and that, too, for my Christian brethren and the virgins of Christ and the pious women who of their own accord made me gifts and laid on the altar some of their ornaments; and I gave them back, and they were offended that I did so. But I did it for the hope of lasting success – in order to preserve myself cautiously in everything so that they might not seize upon me or the ministry of my service, under the pretext of dishonesty, and that I would not even in the smallest matter give the infidels an opportunity to defame or defile'.[109] This uncompromising attitude, it would seem, was considered

108. Conf. 50.
109. Conf. 49; cf. 48.

unwise by some of Patrick's former superiors (*seniores*),[110] who probably helped to finance his mission. He wished everybody to understand clearly, and, by his conduct, to prove beyond doubt to his critics in Ireland and elsewhere that he had undertaken his mission for no material or other human motive,[111] but solely 'because of the Gospel and its promises'.[112] There was nothing, humanly speaking, that could possibly induce him to return to those who once had raided his father's house, had killed all the servants, and had him reduced to slavery from which he miraculously escaped.[113] He had sacrificed – 'sold' he even says in one place – his free status as a Roman citizen for the benefit of others[114] in a country where he was an object of contempt to unbelievers.[115] What else could have prompted him to do so but the grace of God, a superabundant charity that was not of his own nature?[116]

110. Conf. 37: 'Et munera multa mihi offerebantur cum fletu et lacrimis et offendi illos, nec non contra uotum aliquantis de senioribus meis'. The fact that this statement is immediately preceded by the words (Conf. 36 *ad fin.*) 'sed ut patriam et parentes amitterem' has led some interpreters into believing that Patrick here refers to gifts made to him by his relatives in order to induce him to stay at home. Even on the assumption (which I do not share) that Patrick received his ecclesiastical training in Britain and that it was from there that his mission started, I cannot possibly see how a person in holy orders, and under the authority of his ecclesiastical superiors, could be offered gifts in order to change his mind with regard to becoming a missionary in a foreign country, or how his superiors could have objected to his refusal of such gifts. If they wanted him to stay at home, they had authority to bind him by his obedience. However, Patrick goes on to say: 'sed gubernante Deo nullo modo consensi neque adquieui illis'. This is a perfectly legitimate attitude of a bishop to his former superiors in a matter of conscience, but not of one under authority. If I understand Patrick correctly, it was the passing thought to do just that at the moment of his rejection that he describes as his temptation, from which God saved him (Conf. 34; see above, note 69).
111. Conf. 54.
112. Conf. 61.
113. Conf. 61; Ep. 10.
114. Conf. 37; Ep. 10. The latter passage (*Vendidi nobilitatem meam . . .*) might mean that Patrick actually sold his paternal estate in order to finance the Irish mission.
115. Conf. 37: 'ab incredulis contumelias perferre'. This might be an oblique reference to the druids, but the expression is too vague to allow such an assertion to be made with confidence.
116. Cf. Conf. 13, 15.

Concerning the character of the Celtic religion in Ireland which Patrick had to combat it is impossible to assert much. It presumably resembled in all essentials the Celtic religion of Gaul, which is comparatively better known.[117] All that Patrick himself tells us is that the Irish until then had worshipped 'idols and things impure';[118] and his contrasting of sun-worship, which will lead to damnation, with the worship of the true Sun, Christ, which will give eternal life,[119] may be understood as a reference to the worship of the sun among the Irish pagans.[120] That the Celts, like many other peoples, did worship the sun is known, but the evidence for Ireland is neither very substantial nor very explicit. What the idols were like it is difficult to imagine; they were hardly as elaborate as, apparently, were the effigies (*simulacra*) of Mercurius (Lug) which are mentioned by Caesar,[121] but might rather have resembled the 'diabolical monsters of unshapely form, rigid with fierce expression' which in the time of Gildas could still be seen in deserted places of Roman Britain.[122] 'Things impure' might be a reference to phallic symbols,[123] but it is perhaps wiser not to put too specific an interpretation on Patrick's words.[124]

The post-Tírechán Patrick legend[125] knows of the destruction by the saint of an idol, or rather a group of idols, in Mag Slecht.[126] The idol in the centre, called Cenn Crúaich, was adorned with gold and silver; it was surrounded by

117. For this section, see Jan de Vries, *Keltische Religion*, Stuttgart 1961, *passim*.
118. Conf. 41: 'qui . . . idola et inmunda usque nunc semper coluerunt'.
119. Conf. 60.
120. So de Vries, *op. cit.*, 131.
121. *De Bello Gallico*, VI, 17, 1.
122. *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae*, c. 4.
123. Cf., e.g., de Vries, *op. cit.*, 200.
124. Patrick's expression 'inmunda' might be understood as a contrast to 'castitas religionis non fictae' (Conf. 44), which evidently means purity of doctrine and discipline (see my commentary, *Libri Epistolarum*, II, 175).
125. Vita IV, c. 53 (cf. Vita III, c. 46) and *Bethu Phátraic*, lines 1004-22 (ed. Mulchrone).
126. Now Moyslaught, Ballymagauran, co. Cavan. On this story see O'Duigeannáin, 'On the Medieval Sources for the Legend of Cenn (Crom) Cróich of Mág Slécht' in *Féil Sgríbhinn Eóin Mhic Néill*, Dublin 1940, 296-306.

twelve others made of bronze.[127] Patrick threatened it with the *bachall Ísu* – the staff, which, according to this later legend, he had received from God on one of the Tyrrhene islands; not only did the idol turn to the right side, but it also received the impression of Patrick's staff on its left side, although the staff had never left the saint's hand, 'and its mark may be seen to the present day'. The other twelve idols were swallowed by the earth, only their heads remaining above the ground. Then Patrick exorcized the demon that had been dwelling in the principal idol, made him appear to the crowd, and sent him to hell. The story is a typical hagiographical legend, modelled on similar ones in the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles and elsewhere. However, it would seem to be also an 'aetiological legend', that is to say, a story invented in order to explain some strange feature – in this case the mark on the left side of the central idol. Whoever invented the story must have seen a place of pagan worship, with the remnants of idols that had at one time been incompletely destroyed. If Gildas saw idols in Britain in the sixth century, this might easily have been possible in Ireland during the seventh century or even the eighth, to which time, in my opinion, the story goes back.

The Patrick-legend frequently mentions druids. For the hagiographer they are, understandably, wizards or sorcerers (*magi*, *aruspices*, *incantatores*). If they resembled in any degree the druids of Gaul as described by Caesar and other ancient authors, they must have been far more than that: priests who presided at sacrifices, arbiters between states, and above all, teachers of the social *élite*. Even the kings respected their authority. Of course, they would practise also *theurgia* of all sorts, including the interpretation of omens and other ways of foretelling the future. Muirchú and Tírechán give numerous examples of druidic magic, but

127. In *Bethu Phátraic* 1005, Cenn Crúaich is termed *árdídal na Héirenn*. This probably means nothing more than that it was, as the story has it, an object of special worship to the *árdrí* Laegaire. The story thus would seem to be part of the Tara legend. However, if the description is in any degree authentic, Mag Slecht must have been one of the major places of pagan worship in Ireland.

these are largely imitations of biblical and other literary models. More characteristic is the deference with which King Laegaire treats his druids, and the detail that his daughters are given druidic tutors. Tírechán's reference[128] to a great number of druids gathering under the presidency of the 'arch-druid' (*ad principem magum*) Recrad would bear out the hierarchic structure of the druidic 'church' as stated by Caesar.[129] Even though the stories are evidently fiction, the background against which they are set might well preserve some genuine features of the period. This would seem to be true also of the passage in Tírechán which relates Laegaire's refusal to accept baptism and his intention, in obedience to his father's command, to be buried upright, in full armour, with his face against Leinster, as a protection of his kingdom against its traditional enemy.[130]

Patrick's teaching would naturally centre on the principal tenets of the Christian faith. He had to address congregations who had only recently turned from paganism to Christianity.[131] He may not have been a great theologian, not even according to the standards of his generation, which marks a rather low ebb between two peaks, but he stood firmly by the great dogmas which had been formulated at the councils of the fourth and early fifth centuries: the Blessed Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the sinfulness of man, the necessity of divine grace. His own way to God had made him more and more realize these truths, and every page of his writings bears eloquent testimony of his orthodoxy. His 'creed', though not a formal 'symbolum', holds a

128. LA 14 v, a.
129. *De Bello Gallico*, VI, 13, 8; cf. de Vries, *op. cit.*, 208.
130. LA 10r, b. Laegaire's refusal to believe is, of course, no more historical than is Muirchú's story of his baptism: see Binchy, *art. cit.*, 67 f. There is every reason for believing, however, that the Tara kings did not become Christian for many years after St Patrick's time (Binchy, *art. cit.*, 68). The burial to which Laegaire is pledged conforms with a pagan Irish practice (see de Vries, *op. cit.*, 83, note 15). When the Tara dynasty laid claim to Patrick, the details of Laegaire's burial, which might well be historical, were possibly still remembered. Tírechán compromises by making the pagan king grant Patrick safe conduct, Muirchú tells of his – half-hearted – conversion.
131. Conf. 38: 'ad plebem nuper uenientem ad credulitatem'.

deliberately prominent position, immediately after the introductory paragraphs, in his Confession.[132] If he instructed the majority of his converts by word of mouth, he must have taken steps to do something more for those who were to receive holy orders. He had come to Ireland with a number of clergy – priests, deacons, and clerics of minor rank – from Gaul (Tírechán, anachronistically, speaks of *Franci Patricii*)[133] and, one is inclined to believe, also from his native Britain, and to some extent would have continued to draw on the clergy of these two provinces for a certain time.[134] However, with the growing number of converts and, possibly, also with the increasingly difficult contacts between his mission field and the crumbling Empire, the necessity of a native clergy would impose itself. These had to receive a much fuller theological instruction, including at least the elements of Latin. That Patrick did train a native priest in person is the most probable interpretation of his remarks in Ep. 3 concerning the bearer of his first, unsuccessful, letter to the soldiers of Coroticus.[135] References in Tírechán to Psalters,[136] *elementa*,[137] or *abgitoria*[138] ('alphabets', possibly copies of the abededarian Psalm 118), written by Patrick for certain of his converts, which probably testify to the existence of such copies believed to be in the handwriting of Ireland's apostle,[139] might point in the same direction, because there is good reason for supposing that in early Ireland the Psalter was the primer of scholastic instruction.[140] The *pueri Patricii* referred to several times by Tírechán[141]

132. Conf. 4. The literature on Patrick's 'creed' has been listed in my edition: *Libri Epistolarum Sancti Patricii Episcopi*, I, 58.
133. LA fol. 9r, a; 15r, a.
134. That some clergy were recruited in Britain is implied in Synodus I, c. 33.
135. 'I sent a letter with a holy presbyter whom I had taught from his childhood'.
136. LA fol. 9r, a.
137. LA fol. 10v, a; 13r, b; 14v, b; cf. 15r, a.
138. *abgitorium* 13v, a; 15r, b; *abgatorias* 9v, a.
139. LA fol. 9r, a: 'scripsit illi [Sachello] librum psalmorum quem uidi'.
140. E.g., the Springmount 'bog book' in the National Museum contains portions of a Psalter on waxed tablets, in a hand of the early seventh century.
141. LA fol. 9r, a; 15r, a.

might be understood to be such pupils of Patrick's. The imparting of personal instruction, however, must for Patrick have been the exception rather than the rule.[142] There were many demands on his time, and he would have had persons in his retinue who were better equipped for teaching than he was himself.

One aspect of Christian life was specially close to Patrick's heart – the striving for Christian perfection. 'Would that you too would strive for greater things and do better',[143] he says to his converts, urging them to a holy emulation. When these words were written, it was not too long a time since the ideal of Christian perfection had taken the definite form of monasticism. If the first *Dictum* is genuine, Patrick had known primitive monasticism in the Mediterranean. However this may be, he was familiar with it and was anxious to propagate it among his converts. The enthusiastic response with which he met, especially on the part of the royal families and the nobility of Ireland, was to him a cause for great spiritual rejoicing. 'The sons of the Irish and the daughters of their kings (or should we translate: 'the sons and daughters of Irish kings'?[144] are seen to be monks and virgins of Christ' he says twice.[145] With unmistakable emotion he tells the story of one particular religious vocation:[146] 'A blessed Irishwoman of noble birth, beautiful, full-grown, whom I had baptized, came to us after some days. The reason of her visit was to tell us that she had received a message from a messenger of God (i.e., an angel), and he admonished her to be a virgin of Christ and draw near to God. Thanks be to God, on the sixth day after this she most laudably and eagerly chose what all virgins of Christ do'. Not always, Patrick goes on to say, do these

142. Cf. LA fol. 15r, b: 'Olcanum sanctum episcopum quem nutriuit Patricius'. Other converts are entrusted to different educators, e.g., Conall to Bishop Cethiachus ('qui nutriuit illum', LA fol. 10v, b), or Mac Ercae to Bishop Bron (*ibid.*, fol. 14v, b).
143. Conf. 47.
144. See Newport White, *Libri S. Patricii*, 294.
145. Conf. 41; Ep. 12.
146. Conf. 42.

young women meet with the approval of their parents; on the contrary, 'they often suffer persecution and undeserved reproaches . . ., and yet their number is ever increasing'. Even to slave-girls and bondwomen ('quae seruitio detinentur') the ideal of virginity appealed strongly. For them, as might be imagined, a vow of virginity was most difficult to fulfil, but many of them, with the grace of God, kept their resolution even in the face of threats and terror.[147] In passing, Patrick also refers to widows and *continentes* (married couples who, as a form of asceticism, had by mutual consent forgone the exercise of their marital rights) – two 'classes' of the faithful who, for a long time, had had a definite status in the Christian Church.

What form did this monastic life take? Not a word of Patrick's is indicative of cenobitic or conventual monasticism. In the case of women, probability is even against this interpretation: twice Patrick mentions in one phrase (one might almost say, in one breath) 'virgins of Christ' and widows or 'pious women'.[148] As regards bondwomen, there can hardly be a doubt that Patrick is thinking of personal vows of chastity. It is more difficult to say whether his *monachi* are to be understood to be 'monks' or 'hermits'; to me personally the latter seems more probable.[149]

The Patrick-legend of the seventh century is far more explicit than Patrick himself. Whilst the author of the Confession is content with sketching the bare outlines of his missionary work, the Armagh hagiographers, above all Tírechán, follow the saint on his journeys step by step, and present his conversion of the Irish as a series of episodes

147. Conf. 42. On these grounds Patrick is specially concerned about the fate of those of his newly-baptized of the female sex who have been sold into slavery by the soldiers of Coroticus 'in longa terrarum, ubi peccatum manifeste grauiter impudenter abundat', Ep. 15; cf. 19.
148. Conf. 42, 49.
149. On the other hand the clergy of a larger, in particular of an episcopal, church were probably subject to a quasi-monastic life as was the case in many churches on the continent in those days: see below, pp. 90 f.

from the day of his landing to the day of his death. If Patrick is reticent about names of persons and places, his biographers furnish them in abundance. They show us the missionary at work, baptizing a giant whom he has raised from the dead, punishing a blasphemous druid, enjoining a severe penance on a penitent robber, giving the Eucharist to the daughters of King Laegaire. However, the saint whom we are allowed to accompany and watch at every turn of his way is no longer the moving, lovable, humble, and fervid author of a great spiritual document; he has turned into a character that resembles the hero of saga far more than a Christian saint. He curses those who oppose him, be they kings or druids, he blesses those who receive him hospitably, he predicts to a hostile prince that his line will either soon become extinct or will for ever be subject to the descendants of a relative; he is endowed with miraculous powers which he manifests constantly, and in the most extravagant fashion. The stories themselves are for the greater part made up of motives of saga and folklore, or else reproduce and vary well-known hagiographical clichés. The literary genre of hagiography is ever-present in Muirchú; Tírechán, who makes a more sparing use of it, and devotes far more space to an account of individual conversions, grants of land to Patrick, and foundations of churches, gives the impression of being more factual. Even Tírechán, however, relates a number of stories of much the same type as Muirchú's, and the two circuits of Ireland which he makes his Patrick undertake are, as has been said,[150] a conventional literary artifice. Moreover, his avowed purpose of vindicating as Patrick's *paruchia* almost the whole of Ireland must arouse suspicion even with regard to such details as the Patrician origin of particular churches. Most critics admit that quite a number of these details are likely to be genuine information, only we are no longer able to decide this in any individual case. On the other hand, certain general features of the picture which the *Breviarium*

150. See above, p. 20.

presents fit well enough into Patrick's sketch and make sense in their Irish context.[151].

In an aristocratic society such as was the society of early Ireland it was logical for a missionary to try to convert the kings and nobles first; this having been achieved, their retainers were likely to follow the example of their lords. Thus, in Muirchú's version of the Tara story, when King Laegaire accepts Christianity, many others are said to have done so there and then.[152] Conall son of Niall receives Patrick with a welcome (*cum gaudio*) and grants him the land for the building of a church, 'where today there stands the great church of Patrick';[153] it apparently represents a mission centre under Conall's patronage. According to Tírechán, Laegaire himself remains a pagan but grants Patrick safe-conduct through his kingdom;[154] similarly, before preaching in the west of Ireland, Patrick concludes a pact to the same effect with the sons of Amolngid.[155] Was the younger generation more readily disposed to embrace the Christian faith than were their elders? This would certainly be consistent with human nature. It is the sons and daughters of Irish kings that follow the counsels of perfection, and the latter are often opposed by their parents.[156] Tírechán tells the story, rich in legendary detail, of the conversion of Gosacht, son of the druid Miliucc.[157] He also makes Enda, son of Amolngid, ask Patrick to baptize his son Conall, but refuse baptism for himself and his brothers 'until we have come to our *tuath*, for fear of being laughed

151. See my article 'St Patrick and the Irish People', in *Review of Politics* 10, 290-309 (1948). Much of what I have said there I no longer maintain, and many other statements I would now formulate more guardedly. In general outline, however, the picture which I have drawn still stands. One detail in Tírechán is in direct contrast to Patrick's own testimony: when Senmeda, daughter of Ende, takes the veil, she offers Patrick 'munilia sua et manuales et pediales et brachiola sua' and Patrick, apparently, accepts the offering. The real St Patrick acted differently, see Conf. 49.
152. Muirchú, I, 21
153. LA fol. 10r, b.
154. *Ibid.*
155. LA fol. 10v, b.
156. Conf. 41 f.
157. LA fol. 15v, a.

at'.[158] Whether true or not, such stories would seem to have their origin in a characteristic social attitude.

As Patrick's irreconcilable enemies we find, in both Muirchú and Tírechán, the druids. It is druids that warn the Irish in mocking verses against the coming of the faith; the druids of Laegaire urge the king to rise against Patrick, and later challenge him to a test of miracle-working; the druidic tutors of Laegaire's daughters try to prevent Patrick from crossing the Shannon; the druids of the sons of Amolngid make a frontal attack on Patrick and his company. Most of these pay for their resistance to Patrick with their lives; Miliucc, rather than bow to Patrick and the God he preaches, prefers to burn himself to death. Only Mael and Caplit, the tutors of the royal princesses, are converted. All these stories are fantastic inventions, and become more and more so as the Patrick legend develops. It stands to reason, however, that the druids as a class should have done their utmost to oppose the introduction of Christianity to Ireland and to stem its progress,[159] and to this extent the picture painted by the hagiographers would seem to be true.

It is more difficult to decide whether the *filid* took an essentially different attitude. Czarnowski thought they did; he even credits them with the creation of the Patrick legend.[160] Needless to say, Patrick himself mentions neither *filid* nor druids. Even in the seventh-century Patrick legend, however, we hear of only two *filid*, Dubthach and his pupil Fiacc. Dubthach is the only person at Laegaire's feast at Tara who rises in honour of Patrick;[161] Fiacc becomes the first bishop of Sletty in Leinster.[162] These stories were local traditions of the church of Sletty, where later a hymn composed in honour of St Patrick was ascribed to their first bishop; or, to say the least, these stories would seem to have

158. LA fol. 10v, b. Tírechán has nothing to say about Enda's subsequent conversion. In the Vita III, c. 49, all the sons of Amolngid, together with twelve thousand of their people, are baptized in one day!
159. See above, p. 73 f.
160. *Le culte des héros . . .*, 149 ff.
161. Muirchú I, 15.
162. LA fol. 18r, b.

been the official reason advanced by bishop Aed, towards the end of the seventh century, when he decided to place his church under the jurisdiction of Armagh.[163] In the next century, St Colum Cille, a member of the Uí Néill, is said to have been a *fili*, and to have defended the order of poets at the assembly of Druim Ceat. However, Colum Cille's connection with the development of the Patrick legend is more than doubtful.[164] To sum up: the second of Czarnowski's theses is not demonstrable, the first a simple possibility.

A class of a certain social status, and one of whose services a missionary would naturally be anxious to avail himself, were the craftsmen. They were needed for the fabrication of sacred vessels, shrines, altarplates and other liturgical objects, and for the building and furnishing of churches. Patrick may have brought some craftsmen over with him, but on the whole he would have had to rely on native skill. Archaeology shows abundantly that in this respect Ireland could serve him very well indeed. The list of Patrick's 'household' at the end of the Tripartite Life includes three artisans, Essa, Bite, and Tassach, two of whom are said to have been bishops. Tírechán introduces Assicus not only as bishop and abbot, but also as a skilled metal-worker, a fabricator of altars, bookshrines (*bibliothecae*), and patens.[165]

From a comparison of Patrick's account of his mission and those of his seventh-century biographers there arise two major problems. One of these is posed by the fact that both Muirchú and Tírechán, and especially the latter, represent their Patrick as consecrating a number of bishops. Tírechán gives the number of bishops consecrated by Patrick in Ireland as 450;[166] the list of 'Patrician' bishops known to him (which, incidentally, includes Iborus, Secundinus, Auxilius) contains some fifty names.[167] Throughout the *Breviarium*,

163. LA fol. 18v, a.
164. *Bethu Phátraic*, line 636 (ed. Mulchrone). Binchy, *art. cit.*, 56, terms the note 'fabulous'.
165. LA fol. 11v, b.
166. LA fol. 9v, a.
167. *Ibid.*, fol. 9v, b.

Patrick consecrates a number of his converts as bishops; Achud Fobuir is expressly referred to as an episcopal see.[168] Patrick himself, on the other hand, never mentions an episcopal consecration at all, and one of his references to ordinations in general would seem, by its wording, to exclude the consecration of bishops: 'so that . . . there should everywhere be clergy to baptize and exhort a people in need and want'.[169] In another passage, Patrick says: 'I went to you and everywhere for your sake in many dangers, even to the farthest districts, beyond which there lived nobody and where nobody had ever come to baptize, or to ordain clergy, or to confirm the people'.[170] There is no indication here that anybody else exercised episcopal functions in those districts. Both Confession and Epistle give the distinct impression that their author was not aware of any bishop in Ireland except himself.[171] This is, of course, an argument *ex silentio*, and it should be remembered that Patrick is equally silent about many other things of importance, if they do not bear directly on his argument. His silence concerning the Eucharist has already been commented on. There are, to begin with, the three foreign bishops, Secundinus, Auxilius, and Iserninus, whose arrival in Ireland 'in aid of Patrick' is recorded in the annals under the year 439. Whatever authority the annalistic entry may have, these bishops have their places in Irish tradition. They are connected with particular sees or districts: Secundinus with Domnach Sechnaill (Dunshaughlin, co. Meath), Auxilius with Cill Usaille (Kilsheely, co. Kildare), and Iserninus (also named Fith=Vitus), with the counties of Kildare and Carlow.[172] The names of Auxilius and Iserninus figure also as co-signatories of the 'Synodus I Patricii'.

It is this document – if a mid-fifth century date for it is accepted – that provides the information which the Confession does not give, and bears out the basis, if not the details, of Tírechán's assertions. This document, as will be seen below, envisages a diocesan organization of the Irish Church, and the existence of a number of bishops, each of whom has jurisdiction in his own diocese, and is not supposed to interfere with his fellow-bishops.

168. *Ibid.*, fol. 13v, a: 'Achud Fobuir in quo fiunt episcopi'.
169. Conf. 40.
170. Conf. 51.
171. See Müller, *Der heilige Patrick*, 83, note 2.
172. See O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 27.

Or should we assume that this document has in reality nothing to do with St Patrick? This has been the opinion not only of Dr Binchy, who would put it back to the seventh century, but also of the Rev. Professor Corish, who believes in its fifth-century date but suggests that the name of Patrick was added to those of Auxilius and Iserninus at some later time. Patrick, so Dr Binchy believes, worked in isolation;[173] had he known the bishops of Meath and Leinster, he was not the man to pass them over in his Confession.[174] Dr Binchy rightly stresses the difficulties and dangers inherent in moving between the often hostile *tuatha*[175]– a difficulty of which Patrick was well aware.[176] On the other hand, Patrick tells us how, whilst taking certain risks, he overcame these difficulties to a considerable extent. When all has been said, there remains, however, the distinct impression that Patrick's mission was mainly, if not exclusively, directed to the north and north-west, to the districts corresponding to modern Ulster and north Connacht,[177] whilst the Palladian

173. *Art. cit.*, 145 ff.
174. Another argument, namely that if Patrick had such people as Auxilius or Iserninus at his disposal, he would have availed himself of their assistance in penning his writings (Binchy, *art. cit.*, 147 f.), carries little weight. Even supposing that these bishops had been in easy reach, which on Dr Binchy's own assumptions as well as on mine is doubtful, the fact that Patrick apparently did not do so can be easily accounted for. The Epistle was written in a hurry, and the Confession is such a personal document that anyone would think twice before calling on another person's assistance in putting it to paper. It is different with the canons. They might well have been drafted by one of the other signatories; I could even imagine that a draft of the document was already waiting for Patrick, and he was merely asked to consent to having his name added to those of the other two bishops.
175. Cf. *art. cit.*, 148.
176. See above, p. 69 f.
177. The extension of Patrick's mission to Meath probably went hand in hand with the Tara legend, see below, p. 84.

mission to the south and south-east was continued by the continental bishops. And yet Patrick claims Ireland as his mission field without qualification.[178] Did he eventually meet the southern bishops and agree with them upon some basic ecclesiastical legislation? This was the opinion of Bury;[179] the possibility of an eventual amalgamation of the two missions under Patrick's leadership is considered also by Dr Binchy.[180]

There is the further problem of Patrick's role in relation to Palladius. The Auxerre account – even, as I have given reasons for believing, in its original form – makes Patrick succeed Palladius. Why, then, does Patrick not start in the south-east, continue his predecessor's work, and make it the basis of further operations? It is worth noting that Muirchú is anxious to bring Patrick, after a landing at the coast of Leinster, immediately to the north, even before his first Easter at Tara. Tírechán devotes his first book almost entirely to St Patrick's acts in Meath, but Patrick's connections with this province are under grave suspicion of reflecting the later aspirations of the Southern Uí Néill. And once this entire complex is discarded, both hagiographers – by the overall picture emerging from their stories – testify to a mission that was confined to Connacht and Ulster. On

178. Conf. 41, 'Hiberione qui numquam notitiam Dei habuerunt' is unlikely to mean 'those in Ireland, who . . .' – see the linguistic analysis of this phrase by K. Mras, *Anzeiger der Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Wien, phil.-hist. Kl., 1953, 102 f., who points out that the locative *Hiberione*, as often in late Latin, might stand for the nominative, and suggests (p. 102, note 15) that Patrick here uses the name of the country for its inhabitants: 'Ireland, who . . .'='the Irish, who'. An alternative interpretation, on which my translation (*The Works of St Patrick*, 34) is based, takes *Hiberione* as locative and the *qui*-clause as dependent on 'quomodo nuper facta est plebs Domini': 'how did it come to pass that in Ireland (people) who never had a knowledge of God . . . have become a people of the Lord?' According to either interpretation Patrick refers to Ireland as a whole, and makes no distinction between parts already christianized before him and others where he was the first to preach the Faith. Neither need such a distinction be implied in Conf. 34 and 51, quoted above, p. 00. See also Bieler, 'The mission of Palladius: a comparative study of sources', in *Traditio* 6, 12, note 17 (1948).
179. *Life of St Patrick*, 233 f.
180. *Art. cit.*, 146, 148.

the other hand, there is no evidence to show that the southern bishops had come in order to assist and eventually to succeed Palladius, and that Patrick – whatever was the date of his mission – had been sent to those parts of the country to which their labours had not yet extended. Not only does this theory – like so much else concerning Irish history in the fifth century – rest entirely on inference, it is plausible only on the assumption that there were two distinct missions to Ireland, a Gallo-Roman and a British one – an assumption which, so far from being forced on us by the available data, is not even, in my opinion, the more probable one of the alternatives. If the mission of Palladius came to an end after two years or a little more, he might not yet have established a permanent see. Patrick, in all probability, did not do so either until fairly late. It is perhaps significant that there exists no early tradition of a see or 'church' of Palladius (nor, incidentally, of Patricius, his alleged second name) in the south-eastern parts of Ireland, where he would seem to have been mainly active. If Patrick, when succeeding Palladius, decided to begin his apostolate in the northern half of the country, he was almost certainly free to do so in so far as he was not tied to a particular place or district by an existing episcopal see. One of his reasons would almost certainly have been his zeal to carry the Word of God to the remotest north-west of the island, which to him and his contemporaries was the end of the world. Another reason quite probably was that he had known the north in his youth, and that, in a more specific sense, the people there had a first claim on his apostolate. It might well have been for this reason that as early as the thirties of the fifth century three more bishops were sent to Ireland, and that they went exactly to those provinces where Patrick did not preach, or had not yet done so – to Meath and Leinster.[181] It would be understandable that later, perhaps after he had come across

181. As has been pointed out above, p. 33 f., the three bishops need not have come together, and there is no guarantee that the annalistic date of their arrival, 439, is accurate. It might well be a few years too late.

the work of the southern missionaries in some border area,[182] Patrick though it desirable to contact his colleagues and to co-ordinate his efforts with theirs. His personality, and perhaps also the fact that he could claim succession to Palladius, would assure for him a certain preponderance, which, among other things, might account for the fact that his name is given the place of honour in the formula of greeting at the head of the set of canons known as the First Synod of St Patrick, to the study of which we are now turning.

This document, which has the form of an open, or circular, letter, begins with a doxology: 'We give thanks to God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit'. This is followed by the formula of greeting, already mentioned: 'To the priests and deacons and all the clergy Patricius, Auxilius, Iserninus, the bishops, [send] greetings'. The preamble, for all its brevity, is revealing: 'We deem it better to forewarn the negligent than to condemn accomplished deeds, as Solomon says: It is better to reason than to be wroth'. Apparently those things against which the legislation of the bishops ('exempla diffinitionis nostrae inferius conscripta') is directed have already occurred, but they have not yet become so inveterate as to make timely admonition ineffective.

Of the canons which follow, six (8, 11, 14, 15 and the last clauses of 24 and 34) are, in my opinion, interpolated.[183] The remainder, though not arranged in strictly systematic

182. The story of how Patrick, travelling through the territory of Uí Maine, in south Galway, found a cross, mistakenly erected on the tomb of a pagan (Tírechán, fol. 14r, b) is taken by O'Rahilly (*Two Patricks*, 29) as an indication of pre-Patrician Christianity in that district. It might just as plausibly be interpreted in the sense I have suggested. I wonder may one interpret similarly Tírechán's story (LA fol. 11v, a; cf. 15r, a; *Notulae* 18v, b; *Bethu Phátraic* lines 1040-47 (ed. Mulchrone)) about Patrick and Ailbe of Senchua (Shancough in Tirerril, co. Sligo): having ordained Ailbe a priest, Patrick indicates to him 'altare mirabile lapideum in monte nepotum Ailelo'. It seems unlikely that the southern mission should have penetrated so far north. Considering the locality where the 'altar' was found, one might be inclined to think rather of a sacred stone.

183. See above, p. 16, note 41.

order, fall into several major groups. Canons 2–3, 6–7, 9–10, 28, and 31–34 concern the clergy under the rank of bishop. Canons 1, 4–5, 12–13, 16–22 and 29 concern the faithful in general. Canons 23–27 and 30 define the authority of bishops in a number of matters.

These canons give a vivid picture of a nascent Church. It is not so much the references to paganism, which did not disappear for some time, that accounts for this impression of a Church in the making; it is the still unsettled state of things, the necessity of stressing the obvious (from an imperial point of view) that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to believe in a seventh-century date of this text as a whole. The clergy, it is enjoined, must be domiciled; each lector ought to make sure in which church he is to sing; a deacon must not absent himself without his priest's permission. All persons in holy orders, from the ostiary upwards to the priest, must take the tonsure, as is the Roman custom, and dress decently; a cleric's wife has to veil her head. Regular attendance at church services is made a duty for all who are not 'under the yoke of servitude'. A monk and a virgin, who are not of the same place, should not stay at one and the same inn, nor travel together in the same carriage, nor engage in prolonged conversation. (This canon also tells against the interpretation of Patrick's monasticism as a form of cenobitic life.) A tonsured person who relapses into the life of the laity is to be excommunicated until he returns to his clerical state. A cleric who incites a third person to murder another cleric with whom the former has had a quarrel is to be judged a murderer. A cleric who kidnaps a person in captivity instead of buying him free with his own means is a thief. A cleric coming from Britain must produce a letter of introduction before exercising his ministry.

No offering must be accepted from pagans. Money for the ransom of captives must not be collected without ecclesiastical permission. If the collection exceeds the sum required, the surplus is to be placed at the disposal of the bishop, who will give it to some charity according to his discretion. The popular belief in vampires is strongly con-

demned; whoever defames anyone on these grounds has to restore the person's good name before even being admitted to penance. It is sinful not to pay one's debts. A virgin who has vowed herself to God and afterwards takes a spouse in the flesh commits adultery. A marriage lawfully contracted is binding for life; to forsake one's husband and live with another man is adultery even if the latter pays another bride-price to the woman's father. Baptism should not be given to persons under the age of forty.

Bishops must be asked to consecrate newly-built churches before Mass is offered therein. No priest from outside the congregation (i.e., the *paruchia* or diocese) is allowed to minister without the bishop's permission. Whenever the bishop visits a church, the offerings made are to be disposed of as he will rule. Outside his diocese, however, a bishop has no jurisdiction; even on a Sunday he shall offer Mass only if he is invited to do so by his host.

The punishment for the violation of these decrees is, with few exceptions, excommunication, which may be revoked, however, as soon as the guilty person makes amends. Excommunication is a complete severance from the congregation; the excommunicated must not enter the church even on the Easter Vigil; not even their alms are to be accepted. An excommunicated cleric is suspended from his office, and is not allowed to pray together with his colleagues.

Some of these canons, in content as well as in wording, echo ecclesiastical legislation on the continent. In particular, the penitential discipline underlying this text is clearly that of the ancient Church. Most of the canons dealing with sins or breaches of ecclesiastical discipline merely state causes for excommunication. Where penance is mentioned, its duration is not specified in the later Irish manner.[184] C. 29, which

184. Canons 14 and 15, which prescribe penances in accordance with the later Irish practice (though considerably shorter ones than those in the Irish penitentials), and put the penitent in charge of a priest, and not of his bishop, must also on linguistic grounds be dated later than the fifth century. It should be noted, however, that the three crimes to which canon 14 relates – murder, adultery, and pagan practices – are the three 'capital sins' of the patristic tradition.

prescribes a minimum age of forty years for the reception of baptism, might also be understood in the context of early ecclesiastical discipline. Another continental heritage is the organized charity for the ransom of prisoners. Patrick[185] knows it as a custom of the Roman Christians of Gaul. It was practised on a large scale by SS Hilary and Caesarius of Arles and by St Germanus of Paris.[186] The 'custom of the ancients'[187] is expressly invoked as authority for the bishop's right to dispose of offerings made in his presence.

Other canons refer more particularly to the special circumstances of the Christian Church in Ireland. The social structure of the new mission-country differed so greatly from that of the Roman Empire, even from a semi-Romanized province as was Britain, that the establishment of orderly church life must have presented technical as well as human difficulties not experienced elsewhere. Throughout the Empire, the Church had her centres in the cities. Irish society was rural, and cities were unknown. Such things as the attachment of each person in holy orders to a particular church, which would be a matter of course for an imperial Roman, had to be specially enjoined and enforced. More difficult still was the Church's fight against the liberating of a captive by force or ruse – things to which the Irish were accustomed from their frequent tribal wars, and which even a newly-ordained Irish cleric might consider natural and unobjectionable. The old Adam was dying hard.

Of particular interest is canon 30: 'Any bishop who goes from his own parish (that is, diocese) to another must not presume to ordain unless he has received permission from him who holds jurisdiction in the place'. This is a clear statement of the principle of diocesan jurisdiction in the continental manner. The principle would, of course, have to be adapted to Irish conditions. The diocese, it has been

185. Ep. 14.
186. See the references given by Noll, *Eugippius, Das Leben des heiligen Severin*, Berlin 1963, 126. St Severin did the same in the Roman border province of Noricum.
187. Can. 25: 'pontificalia dona, sicut mos antiquis (not *antiquus*, as is often edited!) ordinare'.

plausibly suggested,[188] would normally correspond to a *tuath* or a group of *tuatha*. Like these, it would often have no strictly defined boundaries. In the absence of cities, the bishop with his household would reside near his church, which would seem to have often been built in the vicinity of a royal residence. These episcopal sees, called *ciuitates* in accordance with the Roman tradition, must have developed into settlements of some magnitude.

Here another problem arises. The formula of greeting is addressed to 'priests, deacons, and all the clergy', but not to bishops. Were the signatories of the decrees the only bishops in Ireland at that time? It would hardly have been necessary for them to define their competences so carefully. Besides, their dioceses would have been unusually large – each equal to one or two provinces. Or was the diocesan organization of Ireland, and the consecration of an appropriate number of native bishops planned but not yet put into effect? I offer a different solution. With the exception of canon 30, those canons in which bishops are mentioned all deal with the duties of the lower clergy towards their bishops, not with the rights and duties of bishops in relation to each other. The three bishops under whose names the decrees are issued had come from the continent. They, and they alone, were sufficiently familiar with ecclesiastical legislation to make such decrees at that stage. They might also have held some authority over other bishops, of Irish birth, whom they themselves had consecrated. The latter do not fall under their decrees (with one exception); one of the aims of this 'synod' was exactly this: to establish their status.

The question has often been asked how it was possible that the diocesan organization of the primitive Irish Church was so completely superseded by the monastic organization of the sixth and later centuries. The answer seems to be provided in large measure by the specific nature of the Irish dioceses. In order to be workable, the episcopal *ciuitates* must have housed a fairly numerous clergy, which, as has

188. See Ryan, 'St Patrick, apostle of Ireland', in *Studies* 50, 139 (1961).

long been suggested, was probably organized as a quasi-monastic community on the Augustinian and Gallican pattern.[189] If Patrick was trained at Auxerre he would have known this synthesis at first hand. When, from the sixth century onwards, monasticism became the dominant feature of Irish Christianity, when the monastic *familiae* expanded more and more at the expense of the old episcopal churches, the absorption of the latter was apparently eased by the fact that a monastic element was inherent in their own structure. Even the term *ciuitas* was taken over, and came to be used for a monastic settlement. It does not seem, however, that this 'monastic church' was a mere development of the quasi-monastic 'episcopal church'. Most of the famous monastic founders were not bishops, and they preferred to found their monasteries in remote places.

Patrick's own church, and the headquarters of his mission, was Armagh.[190] The site, in all probability, had been chosen deliberately, because of its vicinity to the ancient royal residence of the Ulaid, the fort of Emain Macha. Armagh must then have been founded at a time when the Ulidian monarchy was still intact. Unfortunately, the fall of Emain cannot be dated accurately. Its destruction by 'the three Collas' in about A.D. 330 has been exposed as a fable of the 'synthetic historians'. It is now generally believed that it was three brothers of Laegaire, Eogan, Conall, and Enda, the ancestors of the Northern Uí Néill, who destroyed Emain, reduced the kingdom of the Ulaid to its eastern corner which continued to be known under this name, established their own kingdoms in the north-west, and exercised a protectorate over the territory of the Airgialla, which included Armagh. According to Professors Carney[191] and

189. See Zimmer, *Sitzungsberichte Berlin*, 1909, 558 f.; Müller, *Der heilige Patrick*, 108-10; Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, Harvard 1959, 385 ff., esp. 397-9; Sheehy, 'Concerning the origin of early medieval Irish monasticism', in *Ir. Theol. Quart.* 29, 136-44 (April 1962).
190. This paragraph is based on Binchy, *art. cit.*, 149-54. That Armagh was founded before the fall of Emain is also the opinion of Professor Carney.
191. Carney, *Problem*, 23.

Kelleher,[192] the fall of Emain Macha occurred 'somewhere about the middle of the fifth century'; Dr Binchy also considers the possibility of a date some twenty or thirty years earlier or later.[193] This leaves a fairly wide margin for the foundation date of Patrick's 'city'. The year 457[194] would, to say the least, fit well into this pattern.

There is no evidence to show that Patrick meant Armagh to be a metropolitan see in the canonical meaning of the term. If there is anything in the Mag Ái story,[195] this need not amount to more than the sort of authority over bishops consecrated by Patrick within his own mission-field which I have assumed also for his continental fellow-bishops. This, however, is a mere guess. On the other hand, the presence at Armagh of relics of SS Peter and Paul, Lawrence and Stephen, which apparently were there from an early date, and possibly from the time of its foundation,[196] would seem to indicate a certain, though undefinable, precedence over the other churches.

There still remains one incident of Patrick's missionary years, the raid of the British prince Coroticus. It would be unknown were it not for St Patrick's Letter. The event cannot be dated, but it must have occurred at a time when Patrick had years of successful mission work behind him[197] and a generation of the Irish, whom Patrick had met as children, had come to maturity.[198]

The warband of Coroticus, engaged probably in either a reprisal raid or simply in a piratical expedition, had fallen on a group – a fairly large one, as it seems – of newly baptized Irish. They had slaughtered a number of them, and taken others captive. Patrick, who was not present – he

192. 'Early Irish history and pseudo-history', in *Studia Hibernica* 3, 125 (1963).
193. *Art. cit.*, 153 f.
194. See above, p. 33.
195. See above, p. 15 f.
196. See Carney, *Problem*, Introduction, x-xi, and 46-8; Sheehy, 'The relics of the apostles and early martyrs in the mission of St Patrick', in *I.E.R.* (series 5) 95, 372-6 (June 1961).
197. Ep. 12.
198. Ep. 3.

was, no doubt, on one of his missionary journeys – heard of the cruel deed soon enough to send a priest and some other clerics with a letter from his hand to the raiders on the very next day after the raid, when, to all appearances, they were still in the country. He asked them to return some of the booty, and to release some of the baptized whom they had taken captive. His request, however, was met with open scorn and contempt. Patrick was deeply shocked. The raiders, Britons like himself, were his fellow-citizens of the Roman Empire and, nominally at least, fellow-Christians. By their attack on other Christians, they had in his eyes, forfeited the right of claiming that name. In a second letter, an open letter this time, which was written after the raiders with their victims had departed, and the latter had been sold into slavery to the Picts and Scots in the North of Britain, he denounced these 'fellow-citizens of demons' in the strongest possible terms, which in actual fact amounted to a demand of excommunication of these men and of Coroticus himself. The incident, however, also had a personal aspect. It brought home to Patrick the realization of the contempt in which he and his work were being held by many at home. So far from seeing in his Irish converts new recruits of Christian Rome, they extended to him their scorn for the hated enemy of their country. It is easy for us, in retrospect, to see the other side as well – to understand the clergy of sub-Roman Britain, who would be prepared to go a long way towards conniving with a powerful ruler, who, however bad a Christian he might be, effectively defended their civilization against 'barbarian' threats to which they were constantly exposed.[199] Not so Patrick. To him this raid, and the compromising attitude towards it on the part of the British clergy, was a betrayal of the very idea of the Christian Roman Empire in which he so firmly believed.

It is probably this Letter that called forth those renewed attacks on his person to which he replied in his Confession.[200]

199. See Grosjean, 'Notes d'hagiographie celtique', in *Anal. Bolland.* 63, 103 (1945).
200. *Ibid.*, 104 ff.

Once more he had to speak out. The result is that *apologia pro uita sua* which is our main source for Patrick's life and work, and for a knowledge of his character. With the frankness of a great man and a great saint, he confesses himself to be a sinner, raised to a great vocation by the grace of God, guided by Providence and by the Spirit within him towards this goal against all possible odds, and rewarded by a success which is not his, but God's.

No authentic account of Patrick's death has been preserved. One thing seems certain: if Patrick had died at Armagh and been buried there, his 'heirs' would not have failed to exploit the fact for the promoting of their cause. However, in the appendix to Tírechán we are told that nobody knew where he was buried.[201] Muirchú[202] tells the story of how Patrick, on learning from an angel that he was soon to die, started on his way from Sabul (Saul), where he was staying, to Armagh, where he wished to end his days, but was held up by an appearance of the angel Victor, who bade him return to Saul, and how he was buried in Dún dá Lethglass, the modern Downpatrick. Muirchú also tells of an armed conflict between the Airgialla and the Ulaid for the possession of Patrick's body, but the forces, ready to fight, were first separated by an inundation, and then the Airgialla were deceived by a mirage – believing a carriage with the saint's body to go in their direction. What lies behind this story? Dr Binchy[203] thinks it possible that the invasion of Olidia by the Uí Néill took place in Patrick's lifetime, and that he followed the defeated Ulaid into the remnant of their kingdom, which included the territory around Dun dá Lethglass. However, Armagh remained Patrick's city. Here his cult is attested by 800, and possibly as early as Tírechán. It is St Patrick of Armagh who was to become the national apostle of this country.

201. LA fol. 15v, b.
202. II (III), 5 ff.
203. *Art. cit.*, 154.

THE MAN, THE AUTHOR, THE SAINT

One of the chief motives for writing the Confession was its author's wish to make his readers realize what sort of man he was.[1] In the light of this knowledge, they would also understand 'the desire of his heart' – they would see his work, so often misunderstood or misrepresented, in its true perspective. Whatever may be the shortcomings of St Patrick's writings from the point of literature, in this purpose he has succeeded. We do know what sort of man he was.

Patrick was born a Roman, that is to say, a citizen of the Roman Empire. He was a provincial, the son of upper middle-class parents in a town of Roman Britain, one of the remotest, and most exposed, provinces of the Empire. All the more reason, humanly speaking, to insist on this distinction in a world that witnessed its 'barbarization' throughout the West. Patrick lived all through the most critical phase of the 'decline and fall';[2] to the end of his days he felt a Roman. To him, Ireland is exile, a country outside the Empire; the Irish are 'barbarians' or 'aliens'; his mission field is 'there' and not 'here'. His repeated references to the fact that he had left his kin and his country behind[3] reveals a deep longing, which once is admitted openly.[4] However, the Roman Empire had become Christian; and Patrick not only was a Christian by his background and upbringing, but had been called to extend the frontiers of Christian Rome beyond the limits of Roman conquest. By becoming Christians, the Irish 'barbarians' became 'Romans'. Patrick is 'bound by the Spirit' to stay among them, however much he may long to visit his home 'according to the flesh', or even his spiritual home – Gaul.[5] He has become one with his converts, and if he proudly proclaims himself the son

1. Conf. 6.
2. See Tierney, 'The European Background of St Patrick's Mission', in *Studies* 21, 199-212 (1932).
3. Cf. Conf. 36 *ad fin.*; Ep. 1 *ad fin.*, 10.
4. Conf. 43; cf. 58.
5. Conf. 43; Ep. 10.

of a *decurio*,[6] he does so in the face of those who despise his flock as they despise him. It is a boast similar to that of St Paul: 'They are Hebrews: so am I. They are Israelites: so am I. They are the seed of Abraham: so am I'.[7]

It may seem strange that a man who felt so strongly about his being a Roman should have so poor a command of the Latin language, and be so little influenced by the rich heritage of Christian Latin writing, let alone the pagan classics. There are many explanations of this phenomenon. One is the general backwardness of Britain in the field of Roman literature. Another is Patrick's captivity at the age of sixteen, and his late start as a student. More fundamental is his lack of talent for study, and his aversion to book-learning. At the root of it all, it would seem, is his character.

What strikes the reader of the Confession from the beginning is Patrick's singleness of purpose. Once he was sure of his vocation there was nothing that could deter him, or even in the least deflect him from his chosen path. The preaching of the Gospel, foretold by the prophets, fulfilled by the coming of Christ, and brought unto the corners of the world by his disciples, was to be concluded by the conversion of Ireland, the country of his captivity. Christ's command to baptize and teach all nations was constantly in his mind. The motive that inspired all his actions was 'the Gospel and its promises'.

To a man of this frame of mind learning would mean very little. Even the finer points of theological speculation would seem to him irrelevant. Still less would he care for rhetorical ornament or elegance of style. His book was the Bible. He lived with it. He thought, and spoke, and wrote in its language. He would hardly read anything else, unless he had to.

However, there can be no doubt that Patrick was aware of a defect, a serious 'handicap' Professor Mohrmann calls it,[8] in his education, which had nothing to do with his

6. Ep. 10.
7. 2 Cor. 11:22.
8. *The Latin of St Patrick*, 9.

indifference to intellectual and aesthetic values for their own sake. His command of Latin was inadequate, and so also, perhaps, was his knowledge of theology and canon law. He was not ignorant of the elementary demands of literary style, and did his best – a feeble attempt, admittedly – to meet them. He had no illusions about the fact that his 'rusticity' had been one of the most powerful weapons in the hands of those who stood in the way of his appointment to the leadership of the mission to Ireland.

This handicap was more than outweighed, however, by other qualities. Patrick must have been a man of more than average practical intelligence, determination, courage, prudence, and patience, and all these were marshalled towards an end to which he was completely devoted. At the same time, there are in his nature the gentle traits of friendship, compassion, and reluctance to hurt others even when necessary. He would have much preferred to remain silent about his friend's betrayal,[9] had he felt free to do so, and even the denunciation of Coroticus and his band is wrested from him much against his will.[10] Like St Paul and St Augustine, St Patrick was a man of strong emotions. But whether it is indignation about the wrong done to his flock or to his person, or a deep feeling of disappointment, grief, or sympathy, or an overwhelming feeling of spiritual joy and gratitude to God, it is controlled by and 'integrated' in his perfect submission to God's will. What is not controlled is Patrick's language: whenever he writes under emotional strain, his syntax goes to pieces, and the sequence of ideas is not organized by logical principles, but determined by psychological impulses.

Patrick was not meant to be a writer, and he never aspired to being one. It was sheer necessity, the duty of defending his Irish converts, or, in their interest, of defending himself, that forced him to pen his two 'open letters'. They both give the impression of having been dictated,[11] and their

9. Conf. 33.
10. Ep. 1.
11. Mohrmann, *op. cit.*, 12 ff.

similarity in structure and phraseology has been taken to indicate that the Confession was modelled on the Letter to the soldiers of Coroticus.[12] Their Latin is a unique aggregate of divers elements: biblical language, which gives it its distinctive flavour; the tradition of popular preaching; colloquial Latin of an advanced type; finally, a number of features characteristic of a person who writes in a 'second language':[13] a poor vocabulary, strained semantic extensions, solecisms, repetition of a limited number of clichés, lack of feeling for the 'level' of a particular expression. There is no demonstrable influence on Patrick's Latin of his native British; neither is there any clear evidence to show that it was influenced by the Irish language, which one might expect him to have acquired to a certain degree. Neither language was as yet 'literary' in the sense in which this was true of Latin[14] – even the Latin of St Patrick. As is natural in his linguistic situation, Patrick writes more correctly and coherently in the strictly religious or theological sections; it is his narrative, and even more so his argumentation, that exposes his shortcomings. The former has almost exclusively the popular (not to say primitive) 'and . . . and . . . and . . .'-form, and the latter is involved and anacoluthic (through sheer lack of skill in exposition and through emotional strain) to such an extent that these portions of his work are among the most difficult bits of Latin to interpret. It is in these sections also that Patrick most frequently uses biblical phrases out of context and often gives them a new and unusual meaning, simply because he is at a loss to communicate his thoughts and feelings in his own words.[15] In spite of all, the essential message comes across with a directness and a compelling force which we often miss in works of literary distinction, and particularly in the fashionable rhetorical style of Patrick's continental contemporaries. The Letter (of whose

12. Grosjean, 'Notes d'hagiographie celtique', in *Anal. Bolland.* 63, 105 f. (1945).
13. See Mohrmann, *op. cit.*, 10-12.
14. *Ibid.*, 46.
15. *Ibid.*, 47.

success nothing is known) as well as the Confession are to us what the author of the latter intended it to be – his bequest (*exagaellia*).[16]

The Confession is not an autobiography in any accepted sense. If it has often been called an *apologia de uita sua*, this description also is in need of some qualification. The *qualitas* which Patrick wished his readers to understand is not his human individuality; it is the fact that he, 'Patrick a sinner', had been chosen to be an instrument of God's providence and grace. If Patrick's *apologia* is a self-portrait, it is the portrait of the *imago Christi* in him, drawn as an offering of praise and thanksgiving for the miracle which God had worked in his soul.[17]

It is here that we find the saint. The miracle-worker of the Patrick legend is little more than a super-magician, whose magic (though it is predominantly 'white magic') is more powerful than that of his opponents. Even the ascetic, who fasts forty days on Cruachan Aigle, who says long prayers in ice-cold water, sleeps on a stone, or leaves his night-quarters in order to return to a cross which he had not saluted when passing it on his way, is an invention of a time which placed excessive emphasis on works of mortification. The real St Patrick (to borrow the title of a pamphlet by Father Francis Shaw) was very different. He would bear patiently any hardships that might come his way, he would resign himself to any danger to his life or freedom, he was ready, and even longing, to give his life for the sake of God, if this was his will; but there is no indication of his seeking hardships and dangers for their own sake. He was essentially a man of hard work and intensive prayer, of apostolic zeal and apostolic charity. He had been a sinner in his youth,[18] but God had found him and raised him to the apostolate. He knew he was still a sinner, and earnestly prayed for the gift of perseverance, when he wrote his Confession.[19] He

16. Conf. 14.
17. Conf. 3, 11 f., 14, 33.
18. Conf. 1, 10, 12, 26-28.
19. Conf. 58.

glories in Christ of the fruit of his labours: his exile has not been in vain.[20] His achievement, however, has not been his own work; it is the work of God, of the Spirit that dwells in him, unworthy though he is.[21]

Of this dwelling of the Spirit in him, Patrick had many proofs in the form of mystical experiences. The Spirit was fervent in the youth who prayed in the solitude of his captivity, the Spirit cried out on his behalf, the Spirit prayed within him 'mightily with groanings', the Spirit bade him never to leave, even for a time, those whom he had won for Christ. Patrick's way to his vocation was guided by a 'divine voice' which he often heard in his dreams, and which comforted him in his darkest hour. Yet never would Patrick have gloried in these experiences for their own sake. Neither did he claim the apostolate on their strength when he was rejected; even a passing thought of doing so (if I have correctly interpreted the saint's words) was dismissed as a temptation. He patiently awaited his hour, the hour when God, through his superiors, would send him. The conversion of the Irish, who once had carried him away, whose voice, calling him back, he had heard in a dream, to whom he had sacrificed his birthright, his home, and everything of which he was humanly fond, in order to become the last of the apostles,[22] it was not his doing – it was a gift of God.[23]

20. Ep. 17.
21. Cf. Conf. 11, 33.
22. Cf. Conf. 34.
23. Conf. 61.

ST PATRICK AND THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY

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